THE WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING

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ROBERT BROWNING'S WORKS

CENTENARY EDITION

IN TEN VOLUMES

VOLUME II

Robert Browning
Rome March 28th 69

Robert Browning
aged 46
From the drawing by Lord Leighton 1858
in the possession of R. Barrett Browning

THE WORKS OF

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY
F. G. KENYON, C.B., D.LITT.

VOLUME II—STRAFFORD—
PIPPA PASSES—KING VICTOR
AND KING CHARLES—THE
RETURN OF THE DRUSES—A
BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON—
COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

52281

LONDON: SMITH, ELDER & CO.
15 WATERLOO PLACE. MCMXII

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.
At the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh

INTRODUCTION

STRAFFORD

Strafford, Browning's first drama written for the stage, was an interlude between the commencement and the completion of *Sordello*. It was the outcome of the memorable evening, already alluded to in the introduction to *Paracelsus*, of the supper at Serjeant Talfourd's house on May 26, 1836, in honour of the first night of *Ion*. As the party was breaking up, Macready (who had in the previous February welcomed the idea of a tragedy by Browning on the subject of Narses) turned to the young poet and said, "Write a play, Browning, and keep me from going to America." According to one version of the story, Browning at once suggested the subject of *Strafford;* but in the following August Macready in his diary speaks as though the precise subject had then been named to him for the first time. It was natural that it should occur to Browning, since about six months earlier he had been helping his friend John Forster with a *Life of Strafford*, which the latter had undertaken to produce by a certain date, and was prevented by illness from completing. By March, 1837,

the play was in Macready's hands, and had been accepted by Osbaldistone, the manager of Covent Garden; and on the following May Day it was produced.

The occasion was Macready's benefit, and the house was full of his friends; but the success of the play trembled in the balance. Vandenhoff, who acted the important part of Pym, was careless and slovenly; the King Charles of Mr. Dale was atrocious; the manager, on the point of bankruptcy, had been extremely parsimonious in dresses and scenery; but the fine poetry of the play, its occasional dramatic situations (as at the end of the third act), the great acting of Macready and the charms of the young Helen Faucit carried it through to triumph. The reviews of the critics were decidedly complimentary, and for five nights (Browning himself being in the pit on the second night) the play ran with much popular approbation. Then the abrupt withdrawal of Vandenhoff, who had received a more attractive offer of employment elsewhere, caused the suspension of the run. A melodrama, previously in rehearsal, was substituted for it, and in a few weeks the theatre closed its doors.

Strafford was published by Messrs. Longman simultaneously with its appearance on the stage, but (in spite of a temporary intention in 1842 to include it in the series of *Bells and Pomegranates*) did not appear again in print until it was included in the three-volume collected works of 1863. In 1861 Mrs. Browning spoke of it as "his poorest

work of all." Nevertheless at the time—a time when England was poor in vigorous and original literature—it strengthened his position among the rising poets of the day, and widened his reputation among those who were capable of judging.

Browning's original preface is worth reprinting, as showing his own point of view at the time:

"I had for some time been engaged in a poem of a very different nature [*Sordello*], when induced to make the present attempt; and am not without apprehension that my eagerness to freshen a jaded mind by diverting it to the healthy natures of a grand epoch, may have operated unfavourably on the represented play, which is one of Action in Character rather than Character in Action. To remedy this, in some degree, considerable curtailment will be necessary, and, in a few instances, the supplying details not required, I suppose, by the mere reader. While a trifling success would much gratify, failure will not wholly discourage me from another effort: experience is to come, and earnest endeavour may yet remove many disadvantages.

"The portraits are, I think, faithful; and I am exceedingly fortunate in being able, in proof of this, to refer to the subtle and eloquent exposition of the characters of Eliot and Strafford, in the Lives of Eminent British Statesmen now in the course of publication in Lardner's Cyclopaedia, by a writer whom I am proud to call my friend; and whose biographies of Hampden, Pym, and Vane, will, I am sure, fitly illustrate the present year—the Second Centenary of the

Trial concerning Ship-Money. My Carlisle, however, is purely imaginary: I at first sketched her singular likeness roughly in, as suggested by Matthew and the memoir-writers—but it was too artificial, and the substituted outline is exclusively from Voiture and Waller.

"The Italian boat-song in the last scene is from Redi's *Bacco*, long since naturalized in the joyous and delicate version of Leigh Hunt."

In an introduction prefixed to an annotated edition of *Strafford* (by Miss E. H. Hickey) published in 1884, Prof. S. R. Gardiner sums up with decisive authority the relation of Browning's tragedy to the truth of history:

"Only here and there does anything in the course of the drama take place as it could have taken place at the actual court of Charles I. Not merely are there frequent minor inaccuracies, but the very roots of the situation are untrue to fact. The real Strafford was far from opposing the war with the Scots at the time when the Short Parliament was summoned. Pym never had such a friendship for Strafford as he is represented as having. . . . We have still to ask, how far the impression [of the principal characters] is a true one. For myself, I can only say that, every time that I read the play, I feel more certain that Mr. Browning has seized the real Strafford, the man of critical brain, of rapid decision, and tender heart, who strove for the good of his nation without sympathy for the generation in which he lived. Charles too, with his faults perhaps exaggerated, is nevertheless

the real Charles. Of Lady Carlisle we know too little to speak with anything like certainty, but, in spite of Mr. Browning's statement that his character of her is purely imaginary, there is a wonderful parallelism between the Lady Carlisle of the play and the less noble Lady Carlisle which history conjectures rather than describes. There is the same tendency to fix the heart upon the truly great man, and to labour for him without the requital of human affection, though in the play no part is played by that vanity which seems to have been the main motive with the real personage. On the other hand, Pym is the most unsatisfactory, from a historical point of view, of the leading personages."

This is high praise; for it is the dramatist's function to display truth of character, not accuracy of historical detail.

PIPPA PASSES

At the date (March, 1840) when *Sordello* was published, Browning was already busy on "some plays," and had progressed so far that their production had already been heralded by advertisement (*R. Browning and A. Domett*, p. 29). The three plays so advertised as nearly ready were *Pippa Passes*, *King Victor and King Charles*, and *Mansoor the Hierophant* (subsequently renamed *The Return of the Druses*); and not only these, but also *A Blot in the*

'Scutcheon had been completed before the end of 1840. But this amazing fertility of composition was met by a blank difficulty of publication. Macready was unwilling to accept either of the two plays offered to him; publishers were probably shy of another work by the author of *Sordello*. Under these circumstances, Browning was only too glad to close with a suggestion made by Mr. Edward Moxon (the husband of Lamb's Emma Isola, and himself a poet as well as a publisher) that he should print his plays in an inexpensive manner, namely in pamphlets of sixteen pages, with double columns of small type. In this way was begun the famous series of *Bells and Pomegranates*, by which means Browning's poetical work was given to the world from 1841 until the date of his marriage in 1846. (See Gosse, *Robert Browning: Personalia*, 1892, p. 52.)

The title of the series was thus explained by Browning in a letter to Miss Barrett (*Letters of R. B. and E. B. B.*, i. 250): "The Rabbis make Bells and Pomegranates symbolical of pleasure and profit, the grave and the gay, the poetry and the prose, singing and sermonizing —such a mixture of effects as in the original hour (that is, quarter of an hour) of confidence and creation, I meant the whole should prove at last." A much less lucid version of the same explanation was affixed (at Miss Barrett's earnest entreaty) to the final number of the series.

INTRODUCTION

The eight parts of *Bells and Pomegranates* were as follows :—

I. Pippa Passes (1841).
II. King Victor and King Charles (1842).
III. Dramatic Lyrics (1842).
IV. The Return of the Druses (1843).
V. A Blot in the 'Scutcheon (1843).
VI. Colombe's Birthday (1844).
VII. Dramatic Romances and Lyrics (1845).
VIII. Luria, and A Soul's Tragedy (1846).

The first part was published at sixpence, parts ii.–vi. at a shilling each, part vii. at two shillings, and part viii. (by which time the number of pages had increased to thirty-two) at half a crown. On the title-page of each part the poet is described as "author of *Paracelsus*," without reference to the more recent *Sordello*.

The origin of *Pippa Passes* is thus described by Mrs. Orr (*Handbook to Robert Browning's Works*, 1892, p. 55), obviously on information derived from the poet himself: "Mr. Browning was walking alone, in a wood near Dulwich [Dulwich was a favourite walk from his home in Camberwell], when the image flashed upon him of some one walking thus alone through life; one apparently too obscure to leave a trace of his or her passage, yet exercising a lasting though unconscious influence at every step of it; and the image shaped itself into the little silk winder of Asolo, Felippa, or Pippa."

The setting for the idea thus imagined was provided by his Italian tour of 1838, when he

had visited Asolo, to which he refers in the last lines of *Sordello*. The poem, with its beautiful simplicity, directness and charm, must have been written in a reaction from the concentrated brain-work of *Sordello*, and was ready, as shown above, by the time the latter was printed. Accordingly, it led the way in the series of *Bells and Pomegranates*. Its inconspicuous form was probably responsible for the smallness of the impression made by it. Miss Barrett, however, had read it before making the acquaintance of the author, and, while not regarding it as his finest work, told him that she could find it in her heart to covet the authorship of it, more than any of his other works (*Letters of R. B. and E. B. B.*, i. 22, 24); while the poet himself, in reply, owned that he liked it better than anything else he had done yet. A hostile review called forth a vigorous protest in verse by Domett (*R. Browning and A. Domett*, p. 20); but the general response was in no way commensurate with the beauty of the poem, and it does not seem to have had any effect in rescuing the poet's reputation from the blight of *Sordello*.

The poem in its original form varied considerably from that in which it appears here. It was extensively revised for the collected *Poems* of 1849, and gained considerably in the process. The earlier form may be seen in the reprint of *Bells and Pomegranates*, published by Messrs. Ward, Lock, & Co. in 1896; and the more important variations are quoted in Nicoll and

Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, i. 508–12. The song, *A King Lived Long Ago* (Part III, ll. 164–222), is an amended version of a poem which Browning had contributed to W. J. Fox's *Monthly Repository* in 1835.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

The second part of *Bells and Pomegranates*, containing this play, was published early in 1842. The tragedy is one of the two which, in a letter to Miss Haworth written about August 1837 (Mrs. Orr's *Life*, 1908, pp. 96, 97), Browning mentions that he already had in his head, and when *Sordello* was published in 1840, it was announced as nearly ready. It was written for the stage, but was declined by Macready, and was consequently still in the author's desk when the series of *Bells and Pomegranates* was commenced. It was subsequently reprinted in all the collected editions of his works, but has never been acted, at any rate on the regular stage.

The drama represents an episode in the history of Sardinia in the eighteenth century. Victor Amadeus II. of Savoy, who became king of Sicily in 1713, was forced by the Quadruple Alliance in 1720 to take the kingdom of Sardinia in place of Sicily. In 1730, at the age of sixty-four, he suddenly abdicated in favour of his son, Charles Emmanuel III. The true cause is uncertain; it may have been weariness, combined with the

desire to validate his marriage with a lady of the court; it may have been, as Browning represents it, a device to evade the political difficulties in which he was involved. He retired in the first instance to Chambéry, but soon returned to Turin, and presently began to intrigue for the recovery of the crown. Charles, after much hesitation, was ultimately persuaded to put him under arrest. The final scene in the play is not historical; in fact Victor lived under surveillance for another year, dying in 1732. Charles continued to reign until 1773. Browning's preface sets out his authorities, and his claim to have followed faithfully the inner historic truth of the interplay of the four characters who constitute the *dramatis personae*. For the latest narration of the historical events see *The Romance of Savoy*, by Marchesa Vitelleschi (1905), vol. ii. pp. 497–550.

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

In the sequence of the parts of *Bells and Pomegranates*, this was separated from *King Victor and King Charles* by the *Dramatic Lyrics*, which constituted part iii. This was due to the suggestion of the publisher, who thought it better to break the series of dramas by a group of shorter and more popular poems (*R. Browning and A. Domett*, p. 36). Otherwise *The Return of the Druses* would have followed closely in publication the play which it followed closely

in conception and composition. In the letter to Miss Haworth, referred to in the introduction to *King Victor and King Charles*, Browning describes himself as in search of "a subject of the most wild and passionate love"; and by the time of the publication of *Sordello* this subject had been found, and had materialized into the present play, which, under its first title of *Mansoor the Hierophant*, was then advertised as nearly ready. In 1879 Browning wrote to Mr. Gosse with regard to this title: "Mansoor was one of the names of the third Vatemite Caliph, Biamrallah, but the word 'Hierophant' was used inadvertently. I changed the title to *The Return of the Druses*, and the name to 'Djabal'" (Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes*, i. 368). With this changed title, having failed of acceptance for the stage by Macready in 1840, it formed part iv. of *Bells and Pomegranates*, and was published at the beginning of 1843.

The drama explains itself. The incidents are purely imaginary, with no historical basis. The Druses, who still inhabit Mount Lebanon, derive their religious belief from Hakeem Biamrillah, the 6th Fatimite Caliph and the third to rule in Egypt, in the eleventh century, who claimed to be an incarnation of God. The principal character in the play, Djabal, persuades others, notably the girl Anael, that he is a re-incarnation of God, a new Hakeem, in order that he may lead the Druses, who, in an island of the Aegean Sea, are oppressed by a tyrannous Grand Master

of the Knights Hospitallers, in a revolt against their oppressor, and bring them back to Lebanon. This imaginary history is of importance only as a setting for a drama of acute human emotion, —of deception for a patriotic end, of exaltation amounting for a moment to self-deception, of disillusionment, of hopes baffled even in their accomplishment, on the part of Djabal, of utter and ecstatic devotion on the part of Anael. In no other play has Browning tried to depict emotional passion at such a height; and though Macready was no doubt right in not bringing it to the test of the stage, it is a poetical and romantic drama which will not lack readers.

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

From the biographical point of view, this is the most important of all Browning's dramas. The date of its composition is fixed by a letter from Browning to Macready, published by Mr. T. J. Wise with the conjectural date "circa 1843," but shown by Mr. Hall Griffin to belong to 1840, being dated from Hanover Cottage, Browning's Camberwell home, which he left in December of that year; and it was the third play to be offered to Macready within the year. Macready (then at the Haymarket), after some delay, accepted it, intending to produce it at Drury Lane, of which he undertook the management in December, 1841. A long delay intervened,

increased by the unexpected failure of a play on which the manager had built high hopes, and the consequent closing of the theatre from May to October. The fact was that, as in the case of *Strafford*, Macready became less enthusiastic about the play as time drew on. He consulted Forster, who consulted Dickens; and Dickens wrote ecstatically in its favour, as "full of genius, natural and great thoughts, profound and yet simple and beautiful in its vigour . . . a tragedy that *must* be played." At last Macready, in accordance with his promise to Browning, put the play into rehearsal. Hints were not spared that it would be better to withdraw it, but Browning wholly misunderstood them. Then Macready intimated that he should be unable to play in it himself. Still Browning did not perceive the deduction which was intended, and believed that he was meeting Macready's wishes by accepting Phelps as his substitute. The story has been told at least thrice in considerable detail,—by Joseph Arnould in a contemporary letter to Domett (*R. Browning and A. Domett*, pp. 62–67), by Browning himself, forty-one years afterwards, in a letter to Mr. Hill of the *Daily News* (Mrs. Orr's *Life*, 1908, pp. 110–114), and by Mr. Gosse with much picturesque detail in his *Personalia:* how, Phelps being ill, Macready took the part again in rehearsal; how he presently intimated that he was prepared to act it on the first night; how, on becoming aware of Phelps' disappoint-

ment, Browning declared himself quite willing to leave the part in his hands; how Macready was mortally offended, and did all that he could to invite failure; how on the first night (Feb. 11, 1843), with Phelps and Helen Faucit in the principal parts, the play was received with much applause; and how, after two further performances to almost empty houses, it was withdrawn.

To Browning, both personally and as a poet, the misunderstanding was disastrous. It cost him the friendship of Macready; it wrecked the chances of the play which, of all that he ever wrote, had the best prospect of success on the stage. Further, for some unknown reason, Forster did not communicate to Browning (as he was authorized to do) the very favourable opinion of Dickens; it was not until he published it in his *Life of Dickens* that Browning heard of it, when he not unnaturally felt sore that he had been deprived of a testimonial which might have carried much weight with the public at a time when he needed such help.

In order to defeat an attempt made by Macready to rewrite portions of the play (especially the ending, where he wished to convert Tresham's suicide into a retirement to a monastery), Browning had it hastily printed and issued as part v. of *Bells and Pomegranates*, following *The Return of the Druses* at an interval of only a few weeks. It went into a second edition in the course of the same year. In 1848, when

Browning was in Italy, the play was revived by Phelps at Sadler's Wells with "complete success," as Mrs. Browning was assured by Mr. Chorley of the *Athenæum*. A later performance, organized by the Browning Society in 1888, with Miss Alma Murray in the part of Mildred, also deserves mention.

Helen Faucit's account of the first performance is given in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1881, p. 326.

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

In spite of the ill success of Browning's two acted plays, *Strafford* and *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, it is evident that Macready was not the only actor-manager who believed him capable of producing a drama suitable for the stage. In 1845 Browning recalled the fact that Charles Kean had offered to give him £500 for any play that might suit him (*Letters of R. Browning and E. B. Barrett*, i. 200); and it was presumably on the strength of this encouragement that he wrote *Colombe's Birthday*. It must have been taken in hand shortly after the production of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, for in May, 1843, Browning writes to Domett (*R. Browning and A. Domett*, p. 55) that he "must make up his mind to finish a play I wrote lately for Charles Kean, if he will have it. (Macready has used me vilely.)" But again delays intervened, and

again the result was a disagreement between poet and actor. In March, 1844, Browning read his play to Kean, who expressed himself as fully satisfied with it, but wished to keep it, unproduced and unpublished, until Easter in the following year. Browning regarded the delay as unreasonable, and the excuses given as illusory: "This engagement at the Haymarket, next May, is merely for twelve nights, he says. He leaves London for Scotland tomorrow, or next day, and will be occupied for ten hours a day till he returns. My play will take him at least two months to study, he being a special slow-head. . . . It certainly never entered into my mind that anybody, even an actor, could need a couple of months to study a part, only, in a piece, which I could match with such another in less time by a good deal" (Letter to C. Dowson, printed in Wise's *Letters from Robert Browning to Various Correspondents*, 1895, i. 8). The last remark throws an interesting light on Browning's rate of composition, and explains the rapid production noticed in the introduction to *Pippa Passes*.

Browning was by this time in a state of soreness against all actors ("the poorest man of letters I ever knew is of far higher talent than the best actor I ever expect to know," *ibid.*, p. 10), and he thought it important to keep himself before the public. His words are interesting, since they show that the series of *Bells and Pomegranates* had been gradually

working their way into favour, and regaining the ground lost by *Sordello*. "Something I must print, or risk the hold, such as it is, I have at present on my public . . . and two or three hundred pounds will pay me but indifferently for hazarding the good fortune which appears slowly but not mistakably setting in upon me thus now" (*ibid.*, p. 9). Accordingly, no other work being at the moment ready for production, *Colombe's Birthday* was at once sent to the printers, and appeared as part vi. of *Bells and Pomegranates*, probably within the next few weeks. The bargain with Kean thereupon, of course, fell through; and to this was added a breach with Forster, whose review of the printed play (*Examiner*, June 22, 1844) ended with the words "we abominate his [the author's] tastes as much as we respect his genius."

Colombe's Birthday was, however, acted, though not until nine years later. In April, 1853, it was produced by Phelps and Miss Faucit at the Haymarket, with a success (due mainly, according to the reports sent to the Brownings in Italy, to Miss Faucit's acting) which was gratifying to the author, though nothing in the nature of a run was achieved. In 1885 it was revived by the Browning Society, with Miss Alma Murray as the heroine.

The duchies of Juliers and Cleves had a historical existence, being united in 1521, and maintaining a sometimes precarious independence until their final absorption by Prussia

in 1815; but the plot of the play is wholly imaginary.

The motto prefixed to it is from the poems of Sir John Hanmer, for whom Browning had a personal affection which extended to his verses.

The autograph manuscript of *Colombe's Birthday* is in the possession of Mr. H. Buxton Forman, who purchased it at a sale in 1877. Its previous history is given in a letter to him from Browning, on hearing of the purchase (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, i. 55; see also *Athenæum*, Sept. 1 and 15, 1894). It was made for Kean, on the occasion of the reading above-mentioned, and was the copy sent to the printer. "When it came back from the printer, my father caused the MS. to be bound, and I have no notion how it passed out of his or my possession. It is the single poem in the series [of *Bells and Pomegranates*] that I copied with my own hand, my sister being my amanuensis in those days."

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PORTRAIT

ROBERT BROWNING (AGED 46)

From the drawing by Lord Leighton, 1859, in the possession of R. Barrett Browning . . . . . FRONTISPIECE

STRAFFORD

A TRAGEDY

DEDICATED IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY

LONDON: *April* 23, 1837.

PERSONS

CHARLES I
Earl of HOLLAND
Lord SAVILE
Sir HENRY VANE
WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH, Earl of STRAFFORD
JOHN PYM
JOHN HAMPDEN
The younger VANE
DENZIL HOLLIS
BENJAMIN RUDYARD
NATHANIEL FIENNES
Earl of LOUDON
MAXWELL, *Usher of the Black Rod*
BALFOUR, *Constable of the Tower*
A Puritan
Queen HENRIETTA
LUCY PERCY, Countess of CARLISLE

Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford, Secretaries, Officers of the Court, &c. Two of Strafford's children

STRAFFORD

1837

ACT I

SCENE I.—*A House near Whitehall*

HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, *the* younger VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES *and many of the Presbyterian Party:* LOUDON *and other Scots Commissioners*

Vane. I say, if he be here—
Rudyard. (And he is here!)—
Hollis. For England's sake let every man be still
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,
Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard! Henry Vane!
One rash conclusion may decide our course
And with it England's fate—think—England's fate!
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still!
Vane. You say so, Hollis? Well, I must be still.
It is indeed too bitter that one man,
Any one man's mere presence, should suspend
England's combined endeavour: little need
To name him!
Rudyard. For you are his brother, Hollis!
Hampden. Shame on you, Rudyard! time to tell him that,
When he forgets the Mother of us all.
Rudyard. Do I forget her?

Hampden. You talk idle hate
Against her foe: is that so strange a thing?
Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs?
A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing as he went:
But David—five smooth pebbles from the brook
Within his scrip . . .
Rudyard. Be you as still as David!
Fiennes. Here 's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue
Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments;
Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with us!
Rudyard. Let 's hope for news of them now he returns—
He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought!
—But I 'll abide Pym's coming.
Vane. Now, by Heaven,
Then may be cool who can, silent who will—
Some have a gift that way! Wentworth is here,
Here, and the King 's safe closeted with him
Ere this. And when I think on all that 's past
Since that man left us, how his single arm
Rolled the advancing good of England back
And set the woeful past up in its place,
Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be,—
How that man has made firm the fickle King
(Hampden, I will speak out!)—in aught he feared
To venture on before; taught tyranny
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
That strangled agony bleeds mute to death;
How he turns Ireland to a private stage
For training infant villanies, new ways
Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
To try how much man's nature can endure

—If he dies under it, what harm? if not,
Why, one more trick is added to the rest
Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears
England may learn to bear:—how all this while
That man has set himself to one dear task,
The bringing Charles to relish more and more
Power, power without law, power and blood too
—Can I be still?

Hampden. For that you should be still.

Vane. Oh Hampden, then and now! The year he left us,
The People in full Parliament could wrest
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King;
And now, he 'll find in an obscure small room
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
That take up England's cause: England is here!

Hampden. And who despairs of England?

Rudyard. That do I,
If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
May yet be longed-for back again. I say,
I do despair.

Vane. And, Rudyard, I 'll say this—
Which all true men say after me, not loud
But solemnly and as you 'd say a prayer!
This King, who treads our England underfoot,
Has just so much . . . it may be fear or craft,
As bids him pause at each fresh outrage; friends,
He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,
Some voice to ask, "Why shrink? Am I not by?"
Now, one whom England loved for serving her,
Found in his heart to say, "I know where best
"The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans
"Upon me when you trample." Witness, you!
So Wentworth heartened Charles, so England fell.

But inasmuch as life is hard to take
From England . . .
Many Voices. Go on, Vane! 'T is well said, Vane!
Vane. —Who has not so forgotten Runnymead!—
Voices. 'T is well and bravely spoken, Vane! Go on!
Vane. —There are some little signs of late she knows
The ground no place for her. She glances round,
Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way
On other service: what if she arise?
No! the King beckons, and beside him stands
The same bad man once more, with the same smile
And the same gesture. Now shall England crouch,
Or catch at us and rise?
Voices. The Renegade!
Haman! Ahithophel!
Hampden. Gentlemen of the North,
It was not thus the night your claims were urged,
And we pronounced the League and Covenant,
The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well:
Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.
Vane. Hampden!
Fiennes. Stay, Vane!
Loudon. Be just and patient, Vane!
Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon! you
Have still a Parliament, and this your League
To back it; you are free in Scotland still:
While we are brothers, hope 's for England yet.
But know you wherefore Wentworth comes? to quench
This last of hopes? that he brings war with him?
Know you the man's self? what he dares?

Loudon. We know,
All know—'t is nothing new.
Vane. And what 's new, then,
In calling for his life? Why, Pym himself—
You must have heard—ere Wentworth dropped our cause
He would see Pym first; there were many more
Strong on the people's side and friends of his,
Eliot that 's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,
But for these Wentworth cared not; only, Pym
He would see—Pym and he were sworn, 't is said,
To live and die together; so, they met
At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure, was long,
Specious enough, the devil's argument
Lost nothing on his lips; he 'd have Pym own
A patriot could not play a purer part
Than follow in his track; they two combined
Might put down England. Well, Pym heard him out;
One glance—you know Pym's eye—one word was all:
"You leave us, Wentworth! while your head is on,
"I 'll not leave you."
Hampden. Has he left Wentworth, then?
Has England lost him? Will you let him speak,
Or put your crude surmises in his mouth?
Away with this! Will you have Pym or Vane?
Voices. Wait Pym's arrival! Pym shall speak.
Hampden. Meanwhile
Let Loudon read the Parliament's report
From Edinburgh: our last hope, as Vane says,
Is in the stand it makes. Loudon!
Vane. No, no!
Silent I can be: not indifferent!

Hampden. Then each keep silence, praying God to spare
His anger, cast not England quite away
In this her visitation!
A Puritan. Seven years long
The Midianite drove Israel into dens
And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,

PYM *enters*

Even Gideon!
Pym. Wentworth 's come: nor sickness, care,
The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,
More than the winds and waves that beat his ship,
Could keep him from the King. He has not reached
Whitehall: they 've hurried up a Council there
To lose no time and find him work enough.
Where 's Loudon? your Scots' Parliament . . .
Loudon. Holds firm:
We were about to read reports.
Pym. The King
Has just dissolved your Parliament.
Loudon and other Scots. Great God!
An oath-breaker! Stand by us, England, then!
Pym. The King 's too sanguine; doubtless Wentworth 's here;
But still some little form might be kept up.
Hampden. Now speak, Vane! Rudyard, you had much to say!
Hollis. The rumour 's false, then . . .
Pym. Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him back: I know
'T is the King calls him. Wentworth supersedes
The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons
Whose part is played; there 's talk enough, by this,—

Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now
To turn the record's last and bloody leaf
Which, chronicling a nation's great despair,
Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord
Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned in peace.
Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry: the new page
Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth thrust it down
"At the sword's point."
A Puritan. I 'll do your bidding, Pym,
England's and God's—one blow!
Pym. A goodly thing—
We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing
To right that England. Heaven grows dark above:
Let 's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,
To say how well the English spirit comes out
Beneath it! All have done their best, indeed,
From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here: and who, the least one here,
When she is saved (for her redemption dawns
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it dawns)
Who 'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great Men?
We would not—no, we would not give that up!
Hampden. And one name shall be dearer than all names.
When children, yet unborn, are taught that name
After their fathers',—taught what matchless man...
Pym. . . . Saved England? What if Wentworth's should be still
That name?
Rudyard and others. We have just said it, Pym!
His death
Saves her! We said it—there 's no way beside!

I 'll do God's bidding, Pym! They struck down Joab
And purged the land.
Vane. No villanous striking-down!
Rudyard. No, a calm vengeance: let the whole land rise
And shout for it. No Feltons!
Pym. Rudyard, no!
England rejects all Feltons; most of all
Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the trust again
Of England in her servants—but I 'll think
You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
Spite of the past, Wentworth rejoins you, friends!
Vane and others. Wentworth? Apostate! Judas! Double-dyed
A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed . . .
Pym. . . . Who says
Vane never knew that Wentworth, loved that man,
Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in arm,
Along the streets to see the people pass,
And read in every island-countenance
Fresh argument for God against the King,—
Never sat down, say, in the very house
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts,
(You 've joined us, Hampden—Hollis, you as well,)
And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .
Vane. To frame, we know it well, the choicest clause
In the Petition of Right: he framed such clause
One month before he took at the King's hand
His Northern Presidency, which that Bill
Denounced.
Pym. Too true! Never more, never more
Walked we together! Most alone I went.
I have had friends—all here are fast my friends—
But I shall never quite forget that friend.

And yet it could not but be real in him!
You, Vane,—you, Rudyard, have no right to trust
To Wentworth: but can no one hope with me?
Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed English blood
Like water?
Hampden. Ireland is Aceldama.
Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground
To please the King, now that he knows the King?
The People or the King? and that King, Charles!
Hampden. Pym, all here know you: you 'll not set your heart
On any baseless dream. But say one deed
Of Wentworth's since he left us . . .
[*Shouting without.*
Vane. There! he comes,
And they shout for him! Wentworth 's at White-hall,
The King embracing him, now, as we speak,
And he, to be his match in courtesies,
Taking the whole war's risk upon himself,
Now, while you tell us here how changed he is!
Hear you?
Pym. And yet if 't is a dream, no more,
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the King
To love it as though Laud had loved it first,
And the Queen after;—that he led their cause
Calm to success, and kept it spotless through,
So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our souls, and close content
That violence, which something mars even right
Which sanctions it, had taken off no grace
From its serene regard. Only a dream!
Hampden. We meet here to accomplish certain good
By obvious means, and keep tradition up

Of free assemblages, else obsolete,
In this poor chamber: nor without effect
Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,
As, listening to the beats of England's heart,
We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply
By these her delegates. Remains alone
That word grow deed, as with God's help it shall—
But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts too?
Looked we or no that tyranny should turn
Her engines of oppression to their use?
Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth here—
Shall we break off the tactics which succeed
In drawing out our formidablest foe,
Let bickering and disunion take their place?
Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,
And keep the old arms at their steady play?
Proceed to England's work! Fiennes, read the list!
Fiennes. Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid
In every county, save the northern parts
Where Wentworth's influence . . . [*Shouting.*
Vane. I, in England's name,
Declare her work, this way, at end! Till now,
Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.
We English had free leave to think; till now,
We had a shadow of a Parliament
In Scotland. But all 's changed: they change the first,
They try brute-force for law, they, first of all . . .
Voices. Good! Talk enough! The old true hearts with Vane!
Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there 's no act
Serves England!
Voices. Vane for England!
Pym. Pym should be
Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

SCENE II.—*Whitehall*

Lady CARLISLE *and* WENTWORTH

Wentworth. And the King?
Lady Carlisle. Wentworth, lean on me! Sit then!
I 'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.
Wentworth. No;—or, Lucy, just your arm;
I 'll not sit till I 've cleared this up with him:
After that, rest. The King?
Lady Carlisle. Confides in you.
Wentworth. Why? or, why now?—They have kind throats, the knaves!
Shout for me—they!
Lady Carlisle. You come so strangely soon:
Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd—
Did they shout for you?
Wentworth. Wherefore should they not?
Does the King take such measures for himself?
Beside, there 's such a dearth of malcontents,
You say!
Lady Carlisle. I said but few dared carp at you.
Wentworth. At me? at us, I hope! The King and I
He 's surely not disposed to let me bear
The fame away from him of these late deeds
In Ireland? I am yet his instrument
Be it for well or ill? He trusts me, too!
Lady Carlisle. The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I said,
To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

Wentworth. All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
About us,—then the King will grant me—what?
That he for once put these aside and say—
"Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!"
Lady Carlisle. You professed
You would be calm.
Wentworth. Lucy, and I am calm!
How else shall I do all I come to do,
Broken, as you may see, body and mind,
How shall I serve the King? Time wastes meanwhile,
You have not told me half. His footstep! No.
Quick, then, before I meet him,—I am calm—
Why does the King distrust me?
Lady Carlisle. He does not
Distrust you.
Wentworth. Lucy, you can help me; you
Have even seemed to care for me: one word!
Is it the Queen?
Lady Carlisle. No, not the Queen: the party
That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and Holland.
Wentworth. I know, I know: old Vane, too, he 's one too?
Go on—and he 's made Secretary. Well?
Or leave them out and go straight to the charge—
The charge!
Lady Carlisle. Oh, there 's no charge, no precise charge;
Only they sneer, make light of—one may say,
Nibble at what you do.
Wentworth. I know! but Lucy,
I reckoned on you from the first!—Go on!
—Was sure could I once see this gentle friend

When I arrived, she 'd throw an hour away
To help her . . . what am I?
Lady Carlisle. You thought of me,
Dear Wentworth?
Wentworth. But go on! The party here!
Lady Carlisle. They do not think your Irish government
Of that surpassing value . . .
Wentworth. The one thing
Of value! The one service that the crown
May count on! All that keeps these very Vanes
In power, to vex me—not that they do vex,
Only it might vex some to hear that service
Decried, the sole support that 's left the King!
Lady Carlisle. So the Archbishop says.
Wentworth. Ah? well, perhaps
The only hand held up in my defence
May be old Laud's! These Hollands then, these Saviles
Nibble? They nibble?—that 's the very word!
Lady Carlisle. Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says,
Exceeds the due proportion: while the tax . . .
Wentworth. Enough! 't is too unworthy,—I am not
So patient as I thought. What 's Pym about?
Lady Carlisle. Pym?
Wentworth. Pym and the People.
Lady Carlisle. Oh, the Faction!
Extinct—of no account: there 'll never be
Another Parliament.
Wentworth. Tell Savile that!
You may know—(ay, you do—the creatures here
Never forget!) that in my earliest life
I was not . . . much that I am now! The King

May take my word on points concerning Pym
Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,
I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me,
These Vanes and Hollands! I 'll not be their tool
Who might be Pym's friend yet.
But there 's the King!
Where is he?
Lady Carlisle. Just apprised that you arrive.
Wentworth. And why not here to meet me? I was told
He sent for me, nay, longed for me.
Lady Carlisle. Because,—
He is now . . . I think a Council 's sitting now
About this Scots affair.
Wentworth. A Council sits?
They have not taken a decided course
Without me in the matter?
Lady Carlisle. I should say . . .
Wentworth. The war? They cannot have agreed to that?
Not the Scots' war?—without consulting me—
Me, that am here to show how rash it is,
How easy to dispense with?—Ah, you too
Against me! well,—the King may take his time.
—Forget it, Lucy! Cares make peevish: mine
Weigh me (but 't is a secret) to my grave.
Lady Carlisle. For life or death I am your own, dear friend! [*Goes out.*
Wentworth. Heartless! but all are heartless here. Go now,
Forsake the People!
I did not forsake
The People: they shall know it, when the King
Will trust me!—who trusts all beside at once,
While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,

And am not trusted : have but saved the throne :
Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,
And am not trusted. But he 'll see me now.
Weston is dead : the Queen 's half English now—
More English : one decisive word will brush
These insects from . . . the step I know so well !
The King ! But now, to tell him . . . no—to ask
What 's in me he distrusts :—or, best begin
By proving that this frightful Scots affair
Is just what I foretold. So much to say,
And the flesh fails, now, and the time is come,
And one false step no way to be repaired.
You were avenged, Pym, could you look on me.

PYM *enters*

Wentworth. I little thought of you just then.
Pym. No? I
Think always of you, Wentworth.
Wentworth. The old voice !
I wait the King, sir.
Pym. True—you look so pale !
A Council sits within ; when that breaks up
He 'll see you.
Wentworth. Sir, I thank you.
Pym. Oh, thank Laud !
You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs
The case is desperate : he 'll not be long
To-day : he only means to prove, to-day,
We English all are mad to have a hand
In butchering the Scots for serving God
After their fathers' fashion : only that !
Wentworth. Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them !
(Does he enjoy their confidence?) 'T is kind
To tell me what the Council does.
Pym. You grudge

That I should know it had resolved on war
Before you came? no need: you shall have all
The credit, trust me!
Wentworth. Have the Council dared—
They have not dared . . . that is—I know you not.
Farewell, sir: times are changed.
Pym. —Since we two met
At Greenwich? Yes: poor patriots though we be,
You cut a figure, makes some slight return
For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,
Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!
Ah Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,
Just to decide a question; have you, now,
Felt your old self since you forsook us?
Wentworth. Sir!
Pym Spare me the gesture! you misapprehend.
Think not I mean the advantage is with me.
I was about to say that, for my part,
I never quite held up my head since then—
Was quite myself since then: for first, you see
I lost all credit after that event
With those who recollect how sure I was
Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.
Forgive me: Savile, old Vane, Holland here,
Eschew plain-speaking: 't is a trick I keep.
Wentworth. How, when, where, Savile, Vane,
and Holland speak,
Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn,
All of my scorn, sir . . .
Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts
Claim somewhat?
Wentworth. Keep your thoughts! believe the
King
Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vanes
And Saviles! make your mind up, o' God's love,
That I am discontented with the King!

Pym. Why, you may be: I should be, that I know,
Were I like you.
Wentworth. Like me?
Pym. I care not much
For titles: our friend Eliot died no lord,
Hampden 's no lord, and Savile is a lord;
But you care, since you sold your soul for one.
I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser
Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn
When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,
The thirty silver pieces . . . I should say,
The Earldom you expected, still expect,
And may. Your letters were the movingest!
Console yourself: I 've borne him prayers just now
From Scotland not to be oppressed by Laud,
Words moving in their way: he 'll pay, be sure,
As much attention as to those you sent.
Wentworth. False, sir! Who showed them you? Suppose it so,
The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad
When it was shown me: I refused, the first!
John Pym, you were my friend—forbear me once!
Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,
That all should come to this!
Wentworth. Leave me!
Pym. My friend,
Why should I leave you?
Wentworth. To tell Rudyard this,
And Hampden this!
Pym. Whose faces once were bright
At my approach, now sad with doubt and fear,
Because I hope in you—yes, Wentworth, you
Who never mean to ruin England—you
Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream

In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept
Upon you first, and wake, yourself, your true
And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief,
And Hampden's friend!
This is the proudest day!
Come, Wentworth! Do not even see the King!
The rough old room will seem itself again!
We 'll both go in together: you 've not seen
Hampden so long: come: and there 's Fiennes:
you 'll have
To know young Vane. This is the proudest day!
[*The* KING *enters.* WENTWORTH *lets fall* PYM'S *hand.*
Charles. Arrived, my lord?—This gentleman,
we know
Was your old friend.
The Scots shall be informed
What we determine for their happiness.
[PYM *goes out.*
You have made haste, my lord.
Wentworth. Sir, I am come . . .
Charles. To see an old familiar—nay, 't is well;
Aid us with his experience: this Scots' League
And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs
That they intrigue with France: the Faction too,
Whereof your friend there is the head and front,
Abets them,—as he boasted, very like.
Wentworth. Sir, trust me! but for this once,
trust me, sir!
Charles. What can you mean?
Wentworth. That you should trust me, sir!
Oh—not for my sake! but 't is sad, so sad
That for distrusting me, you suffer—you
Whom I would die to serve: sir, do you think
That I would die to serve you?
Charles. But rise, Wentworth!

Wentworth. What shall convince you? What
does Savile do
To prove him . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's
heart
And show it, how sincere a thing it is!
Charles. Have I not trusted you?
Wentworth. Say aught but that!
There is my comfort, mark you: all will be
So different when you trust me—as you shall!
It has not been your fault,—I was away,
Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know?
I am here, now—he means to trust me, now—
All will go on so well!
Charles. Be sure I do—
I 've heard that I should trust you: as you came,
Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .
Wentworth. No,—hear nothing—
Be told nothing about me!—you 're not told
Your right-hand serves you, or your children love
you!
Charles. You love me, Wentworth: rise!
Wentworth. I can speak now.
I have no right to hide the truth. 'T is I
Can save you: only I. Sir, what must be?
Charles. Since Laud 's assured (the minutes
are within)
—Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .
Wentworth. That is, he 'll have a war: what 's
done is done!
Charles. They have intrigued with France;
that 's clear to Laud.
Wentworth. Has Laud suggested any way to
meet
The war's expense?
Charles. He 'd not decide so far
Until you joined us.

Wentworth. Most considerate!
He 's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots?
The People would be with us.
Charles. Pym should know.
Wentworth. The People for us—were the People for us!
Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust:
Summon a Parliament! in Ireland first,
Then, here.
Charles. In truth?
Wentworth. That saves us! that puts off
The war, gives time to right their grievances—
To talk with Pym. I know the Faction,—Laud
So styles it,—tutors Scotland: all their plans
Suppose no Parliament: in calling one
You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs
Of Scotland's treason; then bid England help:
Even Pym will not refuse.
Charles. You would begin
With Ireland?
Wentworth. Take no care for that: that 's sure
To prosper.
Charles. You shall rule me. You were best
Return at once: but take this ere you go!
Now, do I trust you? You 're an Earl: my Friend
Of Friends: yes, while . . . You hear me not!
Wentworth. Say it all o'er again—but once again:
The first was for the music: once again!
Charles. Strafford, my friend, there may have been reports,
Vain rumours. Henceforth touching Strafford is
To touch the apple of my sight: why gaze
So earnestly?

Wentworth. I am grown young again,
And foolish. What was it we spoke of?
Charles. Ireland,
The Parliament,—
Wentworth. I may go when I will?
—Now?
Charles. Are you tired so soon of us?
Wentworth. My King!
But you will not so utterly abhor
A Parliament? I 'd serve you any way.
Charles. You said just now this was the only way.
Wentworth. Sir, I will serve you.
Charles. Strafford, spare yourself:
You are so sick, they tell me.
Wentworth. 'T is my soul
That 's well and prospers now.
This Parliament—
We 'll summon it, the English one—I 'll care
For everything. You shall not need them much.
Charles. If they prove restive . . .
Wentworth. I shall be with you.
Charles. Ere they assemble?
Wentworth. I will come, or else
Deposit this infirm humanity
I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King!
[*As* WENTWORTH *goes out, the* QUEEN *enters.*
Charles. That man must love me.
Queen. Is it over then?
Why, he looks yellower than ever! Well,
At least we shall not hear eternally
Of service—services: he 's paid at least.
Charles. Not done with: he engages to surpass
All yet performed in Ireland.
Queen. I had thought
Nothing beyond was ever to be done.
The war, Charles—will he raise supplies enough?

Charles. We've hit on an expedient; he . . . that is,
I have advised . . . we have decided on
The calling—in Ireland—of a Parliament.
Queen. O truly! You agree to that? Is that
The first fruit of his counsel? But I guessed
As much.
Charles. This is too idle, Henriette!
I should know best. He will strain every nerve,
And once a precedent established . . .
Queen. Notice
How sure he is of a long term of favour!
He 'll see the next, and the next after that;
No end to Parliaments!
Charles. Well, it is done.
He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,
The Commons here . . .
Queen. Here! you will summon them
Here? Would I were in France again to see
A King!
Charles. But, Henriette . . .
Queen. Oh, the Scots see clear!
Why should they bear your rule?
Charles. But listen, sweet!
Queen. Let Wentworth listen—you confide in him!
Charles. I do not, love,—I do not so confide!
The Parliament shall never trouble us
. . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes, such schemes: we 'll buy
The leaders off: without that, Wentworth's counsel
Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it
To have excuse for breaking it for ever,
And whose will then the blame be? See you not?
Come, dearest!—look, the little fairy, now,
That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest, come!

ACT II

SCENE I.—(As in Act I Scene I)

The same Party enters

Rudyard. Twelve subsidies!
Vane. Oh Rudyard, do not laugh
At least!
Rudyard. True: Strafford called the Parliament—
'T is he should laugh!
A Puritan. Out of the serpent's root
Comes forth a cockatrice.
Fiennes. —A stinging one,
If that 's the Parliament: twelve subsidies!
A stinging one! but, brother, where 's your word
For Strafford's other nest-egg, the Scots' war?
The Puritan. His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.
Fiennes. Shall be? It chips the shell, man; peeps abroad.
Twelve subsidies!—Why, how now, Vane?
Rudyard. Peace, Fiennes!
Fiennes. Ah?—But he was not more a dupe than I,
Or you, or any here, the day that Pym
Returned with the good news. Look up, friend Vane!
We all believed that Strafford meant us well
In summoning the Parliament.

HAMPDEN *enters*

Vane. Now, Hampden,
Clear me! I would have leave to sleep again:

I 'd look the People in the face again :
Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed
Better of Strafford !
Hampden. You may grow one day
A steadfast light to England, Henry Vane !
Rudyard. Meantime, by flashes I make shift to see
Strafford revived our Parliaments; before,
War was but talked of; there 's an army, now :
Still, we 've a Parliament ! Poor Ireland bears
Another wrench (she dies the hardest death !)—
Why, speak of it in Parliament ! and lo,
'T is spoken, so console yourselves !
Fiennes. The jest !
We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win
The privilege of laying on our backs
A sorer burden than the King dares lay !
Rudyard. Mark now : we meet at length, complaints pour in
From every county, all the land cries out
On loans and levies, curses ship-money,
Calls vengeance on the Star Chamber ; we lend
An ear. "Ay, lend them all the ears you have !"
Puts in the King ; "my subjects, as you find,
"Are fretful, and conceive great things of you.
"Just listen to them, friends ; you 'll sanction me
"The measures they most wince at, make them yours,
"Instead of mine, I know : and, to begin,
"They say my levies pinch them,—raise me straight
"Twelve subsidies !"
Fiennes. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies !
Hollis. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland—what has he to do with that ?
How could he speak his mind ? He left before

The Parliament assembled. Pym, who knows
Strafford . . .
Rudyard. Would I were sure we know ourselves!
What is for good, what, bad—who friend, who foe!
Hollis. Do you count Parliaments no gain?
Rudyard. A gain!?
While the King's creatures overbalance us?
—There 's going on, beside, among ourselves
A quiet, slow, but most effectual course
Of buying over, sapping, leavening
The lump till all is leaven. Glanville 's gone.
I 'll put a case; had not the Court declared
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies
Will be accepted by the King—our House,
I say, would have consented to that offer
To let us buy off ship-money!
Hollis. Most like,
If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,
The House . . .
Rudyard. Will grant them! Hampden, do you hear?
Congratulate with me! the King 's the king,
And gains his point at last—our own assent
To that detested tax? All 's over, then!
There 's no more taking refuge in this room,
Protesting, "Let the King do what he will,
"We, England, are no party to our shame:
"Our day will come!" Congratulate with me!

PYM *enters*

Vane. Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, you say,
But we 'll not have our Parliaments like those
In Ireland, Pym!
Rudyard. Let him stand forth, your friend!

One doubtful act hides far too many sins;
It can be stretched no more, and, to my mind,
Begins to drop from those it covered.
Other Voices. Good!
Let him avow himself! No fitter time!
We wait thus long for you.
Rudyard. Perhaps, too long!
Since nothing but the madness of the Court,
In thus unmasking its designs at once,
Has saved us from betraying England. Stay—
This Parliament is Strafford's: let us vote
Our list of grievances too black by far
To suffer talk of subsidies: or best,
That ship-money 's disposed of long ago
By England: any vote that 's broad enough:
And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
Support his Parliament!
Vane. And vote as well
No war to be with Scotland! Hear you, Pym?
We 'll vote, no war! No part nor lot in it
For England!
Many Voices. Vote, no war! Stop the new levies!
No Bishops' war! At once! When next we meet!
Pym. Much more when next we meet! Friends, which of you
Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt,
Has fallen the most away in soul from me?
Vane. I sat apart, even now, under God's eye,
Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,
In presence of us all, as one at league
With England's enemy.
Pym. You are a good
And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my hand

And say you pardon me for all the pain
Till now! Strafford is wholly ours.
Many Voices. Sure? sure?
Pym. Most sure: for Charles dissolves the Parliament
While I speak here.
—And I must speak, friends, now!
Strafford is ours. The King detects the change,
Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes
His ancient path: no Parliament for us,
No Strafford for the King!
Come, all of you,
To bid the King farewell, predict success
To his Scots' expedition, and receive
Strafford, our comrade now. The next will be
Indeed a Parliament!
Vane. Forgive me, Pym!
Voices. This looks like truth: Strafford can have, indeed,
No choice.
Pym. Friends, follow me! He 's with the King.
Come, Hampden, and come, Rudyard, and come, Vane!
This is no sullen day for England, sirs!
Strafford shall tell you!
Voices. To Whitehall then! Come!

SCENE II.—*Whitehall*

CHARLES *and* STRAFFORD

Charles. Strafford!
Strafford. Is it a dream? my papers, here—
Thus, as I left them, all the plans you found
So happy—(look! the track you pressed my hand

For pointing out)—and in this very room,
Over these very plans, you tell me, sir,
With the same face, too—tell me just one thing
That ruins them! How 's this? What may this mean?
Sir, who has done this?
Charles. Strafford, who but I?
You bade me put the rest away: indeed
You are alone.
Strafford. Alone, and like to be!
No fear, when some unworthy scheme grows ripe,
Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose
The mischief on the world! Laud hatches war,
Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,
And I 'm alone.
Charles. At least, you knew as much
When first you undertook the war.
Strafford. My liege,
Was this the way? I said, since Laud would lap
A little blood, 't were best to hurry over
The loathsome business, not to be whole months
At slaughter—one blow, only one, then, peace,
Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both
I 'd lead an Irish army to the West,
While in the South an English . . . but you look
As though you had not told me fifty times
'T was a brave plan! My army is all raised,
I am prepared to join it . . .
Charles. Hear me, Strafford!
Strafford. . . . When, for some little thing, my whole design
Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper?)
I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead
The English army: why? Northumberland
That I appointed, chooses to be sick—
Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers for

The Irish Parliament? or army, either?
Is this my plan?
Charles. So disrespectful, sir?
Strafford. My liege, do not believe it! I am yours,
Yours ever: 't is too late to think about:
To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step
Shall pass for mine; the world shall think it mine.
But here! But here! I am so seldom here,
Seldom with you, my King! I, soon to rush
Alone upon a giant in the dark!
Charles. My Strafford!
Strafford [*examines papers awhile*]. "Seize the passes of the Tyne!"
But, sir, you see—see all I say is true?
My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause
To ask the Parliament for help; whereas
We need them frightfully.
Charles. Need the Parliament?
Strafford. Now, for God's sake, sir, not one error more!
We can afford no error; we draw, now,
Upon our last resource: the Parliament
Must help us!
Charles. I 've undone you, Strafford!
Strafford. Nay—
Nay—why despond, sir, 't is not come to that!
I have not hurt you? Sir, what have I said
To hurt you? I unsay it! Don't despond!
Sir, do you turn from me?
Charles. My friend of friends!
Strafford. We 'll make a shift. Leave me the Parliament!
Help they us ne'er so little and I'll make
Sufficient out of it. We 'll speak them fair.

They 're sitting, that 's one great thing; that half gives
Their sanction to us; that 's much: don't despond!
Why, let them keep their money, at the worst!
The reputation of the People's help
Is all we want: we 'll make shift yet!
Charles. Good Strafford!
Strafford. But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small
They offer, we 'll accept it: any sum—
For the look of it: the least grant tells the Scots
The Parliament is ours—their staunch ally
Turned ours: that told, there 's half the blow to strike!
What will the grant be? What does Glanville think?
Charles. Alas!
Strafford. My liege?
Charles. Strafford!
Strafford. But answer me!
Have they . . . O surely not refused us half?
Half the twelve subsidies? We never looked
For all of them. How many do they give?
Charles. You have not heard . . .
Strafford. (What has he done?)—Heard what?
But speak at once, sir, this grows terrible!
[*The* KING *continuing silent.*
You have dissolved them!—I 'll not leave this man.
Charles. 'T was old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.
Strafford. Old Vane?
Charles. He told them, just about to vote the half,
That nothing short of all twelve subsidies
Would serve our turn, or be accepted.
Strafford. Vane!

Vane! Who, sir, promised me, that very Vane . . .
O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,
The one last hope—I that despair, my hope—
That I should reach his heart one day, and cure
All bitterness one day, be proud again
And young again, care for the sunshine too,
And never think of Eliot any more,—
God, and to toil for this, go far for this,
Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart
And find Vane there!

[*Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with a forced calmness.*

Northumberland is sick:
Well, then, I take the army: Wilmot leads
The horse, and he, with Conway, must secure
The passes of the Tyne: Ormond supplies
My place in Ireland. Here, we 'll try the City:
If they refuse a loan—debase the coin
And seize the bullion! we 've no other choice.
Herbert . . .
And this while I am here! with you!
And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane! I go,
And, I once gone, they 'll close around you, sir,
When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure
To ruin me—and you along with me!
Do you see that? And you along with me!
—Sir, you 'll not ever listen to these men,
And I away, fighting your battle? Sir,
If they—if She—charge me, no matter how—
Say you, "At any time when he returns
"His head is mine!" Don't stop me there! You know
My head is yours, but never stop me there!

Charles. Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the war,
And . . .

Strafford. I ! I ! that was never spoken with
Till it was entered on ! That loathe the war !
That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .
Do you know, sir, I think within my heart,
That you would say I did advise the war ;
And if, through your own weakness, or what 's worse,
These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,
You will not step between the raging People
And me, to say . . .
I knew it ! from the first
I knew it ! Never was so cold a heart !
Remember that I said it—that I never
Believed you for a moment !
—And, you loved me ?
You thought your perfidy profoundly hid
Because I could not share the whisperings
With Vane, with Savile ? What, the face was masked ?
I had the heart to see, sir ! Face of flesh,
But heart of stone—of smooth cold frightful stone !
Ay, call them ! Shall I call for you ? The Scots
Goaded to madness ? Or the English—Pym—
Shall I call Pym, your subject ? Oh, you think
I 'll leave them in the dark about it all ?
They shall not know you ? Hampden, Pym shall not ?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.*, *enter*

[*Dropping on his knee.*] Thus favoured with your gracious countenance
What shall a rebel League avail against
Your servant, utterly and ever yours ?
So, gentlemen, the King 's not even left
The privilege of bidding me farewell

Who haste to save the People—that you style
Your People—from the mercies of the Scots
And France their friend?
[*To* CHARLES.] Pym's grave grey eyes are fixed
Upon you, sir!
Your pleasure, gentlemen?
Hampden. The King dissolved us—'t is the King we seek
And not Lord Strafford.
Strafford. —Strafford, guilty too
Of counselling the measure. [*To* CHARLES.] (Hush . . . you know—
You have forgotten—sir, I counselled it)
A heinous matter, truly! But the King
Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell them so!) —he blames.
Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge:
I shall be with the Scots, you understand?
Then yelp at me!
Meanwhile, your Majesty
Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . .
[*Under the pretence of an earnest farewell,* STRAFFORD *conducts* CHARLES *to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest: as the King disappears, they turn as by one impulse to* PYM, *who has not changed his original posture of surprise.*
Hampden. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man!
Vane and others. Hence, Pym! Come out of this unworthy place
To our old room again! He 's gone.
[STRAFFORD, *just about to follow the* KING, *looks back.*

Pym. Not gone!
[*To* STRAFFORD.] Keep tryst! the old appointment 's made anew:
Forget not we shall meet again!
Strafford. So be it!
And if an army follows me?
Vane. His friends
Will entertain your army!
Pym. I 'll not say
You have misreckoned, Strafford: time shows.
Perish
Body and spirit! Fool to feign a doubt,
Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve
Of one whose prowess shall achieve the feat!
What share have I in it? Do I affect
To see no dismal sign above your head
When God suspends his ruinous thunder there?
Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one of you!
[PYM, HAMPDEN, *etc.*, *go out.*
Strafford. Pym, we shall meet again!

Lady CARLISLE *enters*

You here, child?
Lady Carlisle. Hush—
I know it all: hush, Strafford!
Strafford. Ah? you know?
Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy!
All knights begin their enterprise, we read,
Under the best of auspices; 't is morn,
The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth
(He 's always very young)—the trumpets sound,
Cups pledge him, and, why, the King blesses him—
You need not turn a page of the romance
To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. Indeed,
We 've the fair Lady here; but she apart,—
A poor man, rarely having handled lance,

And rather old, weary, and far from sure
His Squires are not the Giant's friends. All 's one:
Let us go forth!
Lady Carlisle. Go forth?
Strafford. What matters it?
We shall die gloriously—as the book says.
Lady Carlisle. To Scotland? Not to Scotland?
Strafford. Am I sick
Like your good brother, brave Northumberland?
Beside, these walls seem falling on me.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford,
The wind that saps these walls can undermine
Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence creeps the wind?
Have you no eyes except for Pym? Look here!
A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive
In your contempt. You 'll vanquish Pym? Old Vane
Can vanquish you. And Vane you think to fly?
Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's slight sneer
Shall test success, adjust the praise, suggest
The faint result: Vane's sneer shall reach you there.
—You do not listen!
Strafford. Oh,—I give that up!
There 's fate in it: I give all here quite up.
Care not what old Vane does or Holland does
Against me! 'T is so idle to withstand!
In no case tell me what they do!
Lady Carlisle. But, Strafford . . .
Strafford. I want a little strife, beside; real strife;
This petty palace-warfare does me harm:
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.
Lady Carlisle. Why do you smile?

Strafford. I got to fear them, child!
I could have torn his throat at first, Old Vane's,
As he leered at me on his stealthy way
To the Queen's closet. Lord, one loses heart!
I often found it on my lips to say
"Do not traduce me to her!"
Lady Carlisle. But the King . . .
Strafford. The King stood there, 't is not so long ago,
—There; and the whisper, Lucy, "Be my friend
"Of friends!"—My King! I would have . . .
Lady Carlisle. . . . Died for him?
Strafford. Sworn him true, Lucy: I can die for him.
Lady Carlisle. But go not, Strafford! But you must renounce
This project on the Scots! Die, wherefore die?
Charles never loved you.
Strafford. And he never will.
He 's not of those who care the more for men
That they 're unfortunate.
Lady Carlisle. Then wherefore die
For such a master?
Strafford. You that told me first
How good he was—when I must leave true friends
To find a truer friend!—that drew me here
From Ireland,—"I had but to show myself
"And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile and the rest"—
You, child, to ask me this?
Lady Carlisle. (If he have set
His heart abidingly on Charles!)
Then, friend,
I shall not see you any more.
Strafford. Yes, Lucy.
There 's one man here I have to meet.

Lady Carlisle. (The King!
What way to save him from the King?
My soul—
That lent from its own store the charmed disguise
Which clothes the King—he shall behold my soul!)
Strafford,—I shall speak best if you 'll not gaze
Upon me: I had never thought, indeed,
To speak, but you would perish too, so sure!
Could you but know what 't is to bear, my friend,
One image stamped within you, turning blank
The else imperial brilliance of your mind,—
A weakness, but most precious,—like a flaw
I' the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet face
Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there
Lest nature lose her gracious thought for ever!
Strafford. When could it be? no! Yet . . . was it the day
We waited in the anteroom, till Holland
Should leave the presence-chamber?
Lady Carlisle. What?
Strafford. —That I
Described to you my love for Charles?
Lady Carlisle. (Ah, no—
One must not lure him from a love like that!
Oh, let him love the King and die! 'T is past.
I shall not serve him worse for that one brief
And passionate hope, silent for ever now!)
And you are really bound for Scotland then?
I wish you well: you must be very sure
Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew
Will not be idle—setting Vane aside!
Strafford. If Pym is busy,—you may write of Pym.

Lady Carlisle. What need, since there 's your King to take your part?
He may endure Vane's counsel; but for Pym—
Think you he 'll suffer Pym to . . .
Strafford. Child, your hair
Is glossier than the Queen's!
Lady Carlisle. Is that to ask
A curl of me?
Strafford. Scotland——the weary way!
Lady Carlisle. Stay, let me fasten it.
—A rival's, Strafford?
Strafford [*showing the George*]. He hung it there: twine yours around it, child!
Lady Carlisle. No—no—another time—I trifle so!
And there 's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court
Is dull; do something to enliven us
In Scotland: we expect it at your hands.
Strafford. I shall not fail in Scotland.
Lady Carlisle. Prosper—if
You 'll think of me sometimes!
Strafford. How think of him
And not of you? of you, the lingering streak
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford . . . Well, when the eve has its last streak
The night has its first star. [*She goes out.*
Strafford. That voice of hers—
You 'd think she had a heart sometimes! His voice
Is soft too.
Only God can save him now.
Be Thou about his bed, about his path!
His path! Where 's England's path? Diverging wide,
And not to join again the track my foot
Must follow—whither? All that forlorn way

Among the tombs! Far—far—till . . . What,
they do
Then join again, these paths? For, huge in the
dusk,
There 's—Pym to face!
Why then, I have a foe
To close with, and a fight to fight at last
Worthy my soul! What, do they beard the King,
And shall the King want Strafford at his need?
Am I not here?
Not in the market-place,
Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud
To catch a glance from Wentworth! They lie down
Hungry yet smile "Why, it must end some day:
"Is he not watching for our sake?" Not there!
But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,
The . . .
Curse nothing to-night! Only one name
They 'll curse in all those streets to-night. Whose
fault?
Did I make kings? set up, the first, a man
To represent the multitude, receive
All love in right of them—supplant them so,
Until you love the man and not the king——
The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes
Which send me forth.
—To breast the bloody sea
That sweeps before me: with one star for guide.
Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Opposite Westminster Hall*

Sir HENRY VANE, Lord SAVILE, Lord HOLLAND
and others of the Court

Sir H. Vane. The Commons thrust you out?
Savile. And what kept you
From sharing their civility?
Sir H. Vane. Kept me?
Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse than the last,
If that may be. All 's up with Strafford there:
Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither
Next Lord's-day morning. That detained me, sir!
Well now, before they thrust you out,—go on,—
Their Speaker—did the fellow Lenthal say
All we set down for him?
Holland. Not a word missed.
Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I
And Bristol and some more, with hope to breed
A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.
But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane,
As glared at us!
Vane. So many?
Savile. Not a bench
Without its complement of burly knaves;
Your hopeful son among them: Hampden leant
Upon his shoulder—think of that!
Vane. I 'd think
On Lenthal's speech, if I could get at it.

Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should prove
For this unlooked-for summons from the King?
Holland. Just as we drilled him.
Vane. That the Scots will march
On London?
Holland. All, and made so much of it,
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure
To follow, when . . .
Vane. Well?
Holland. 'T is a strange thing, now!
I 've a vague memory of a sort of sound,
A voice, a kind of vast unnatural voice—
Pym, sir, was speaking! Savile, help me out:
What was it all?
Savile. Something about "a matter"—
No,—"work for England."
Holland. "England's great revenge"
He talked of.
Savile. How should I get used to Pym
More than yourselves?
Holland. However that be,
'T was something with which we had nought to do,
For we were "strangers" and 't was "England's work"—
(All this while looking us straight in the face)
In other words, our presence might be spared.
So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
I settled to my mind what ugly brute
Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,
Locked the doors after us, and here are we.
Vane. Eliot's old method . . .
Savile. Prithee, Vane, a truce
To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,
And how to manage Parliaments! 'T was you
Advised the Queen to summon this: why, Strafford
(To do him justice) would not hear of it.

Vane. Say rather, you have done the best of turns
To Strafford: he 's at York, we all know why.
I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford
Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my lord!
Savile. Was it I altered Strafford's plans? did I . . .

A Messenger *enters*

Messenger. The Queen, my lords—she sends me: follow me
At once; 't is very urgent! she requires
Your counsel: something perilous and strange
Occasions her command.
Savile. We follow, friend!
Now, Vane;—your Parliament will plague us all!
Vane. No Strafford here beside!
Savile. If you dare hint
I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .
Holland. Nay, find a fitter time for quarrels—Pym
Will overmatch the best of you; and, think,
The Queen!
Vane. Come on, then: understand, I loathe
Strafford as much as any—but his use!
To keep off Pym, to screen a friend or two,
I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

Scene II.—*Whitehall*

The Queen *and* Lady Carlisle

Queen. It cannot be.
Lady Carlisle. It is so.
Queen. Why, the House
Have hardly met.

Lady Carlisle. They met for that.
Queen. No, no!
Meet to impeach Lord Strafford? 'T is a jest.
Lady Carlisle. A bitter one.
Queen. Consider! 'T is the House
We summoned so reluctantly, which nothing
But the disastrous issue of the war
Persuaded us to summon. They 'll wreak all
Their spite on us, no doubt; but the old way
Is to begin by talk of grievances:
They have their grievances to busy them.
Lady Carlisle. Pym has begun his speech.
Queen. Where 's Vane?—That is,
Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves
His Presidency; he 's at York, we know,
Since the Scots beat him: why should he leave York?
Lady Carlisle. Because the King sent for him.
Queen. Ah—but if
The King did send for him, he let him know
We had been forced to call a Parliament—
A step which Strafford, now I come to think,
Was vehement against.
Lady Carlisle. The policy
Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments
To earth, then setting them upon their feet
And giving them a sword: but this is idle.
Did the King send for Strafford? He will come.
Queen. And what am I to do?
Lady Carlisle. What do? Fail, madam!
Be ruined for his sake! what matters how,
So it but stand on record that you made
An effort, only one?
Queen. The King away
At Theobald's!

Lady Carlisle. Send for him at once: he must
Dissolve the House.
Queen. Wait till Vane finds the truth
Of the report: then . . .
Lady Carlisle. —It will matter little
What the King does. Strafford that lends his arm
And breaks his heart for you!

Sir H. VANE *enters*

Vane. The Commons, madam,
Are sitting with closed doors. A huge debate,
No lack of noise; but nothing, I should guess,
Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly
Not spoken yet.
Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. You hear?
Lady Carlisle. I do not hear
That the King 's sent for!
Vane. Savile will be able
To tell you more.

HOLLAND *enters*

Queen. The last news, Holland?
Holland. Pym
Is raging like a fire. The whole House means
To follow him together to Whitehall
And force the King to give up Strafford.
Queen. Strafford?
Holland. If they content themselves with Strafford! Laud
Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too.
Pym has not left out one of them—I would
You heard Pym raging!
Queen. Vane, go find the King!
Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym
To brave us at Whitehall!

SAVILE *enters*

Savile Not to Whitehall—
'T is to the Lords they go: they seek redress
On Strafford from his peers—the legal way,
They call it.
Queen. (Wait, Vane!)
Savile. But the adage gives
Long life to threatened men. Strafford can save
Himself so readily: at York, remember,
In his own county: what has he to fear?
The Commons only mean to frighten him
From leaving York. Surely, he will not come.
Queen. Lucy, he will not come!
Lady Carlisle. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.
Vane. Oh doubtless!
And bring destruction with him: that 's his way.
What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan?
The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,
Be wholly ruled by him! What 's the result?
The North that was to rise, Ireland to help,—
What came of it? In my poor mind, a fright
Is no prodigious punishment.
Lady Carlisle. A fright?
Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks
To frighten him. [*To the* QUEEN.] You will not save him then?
Savile. When something like a charge is made, the King
Will best know how to save him: and 't is clear,
While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,
The King may reap advantage: this in question,
No dinning you with ship-money complaints!

Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. If we dissolve
them, who will pay the army?
Protect us from the insolent Scots?
Lady Carlisle. In truth,
I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns
Me little: you desired to learn what course
Would save him: I obey you.
Vane. Notice, too,
There can't be fairer ground for taking full
Revenge—(Strafford 's revengeful)—than he 'll
have
Against his old friend Pym.
Queen. Why, he shall claim
Vengeance on Pym!
Vane. And Strafford, who is he
To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
That harass all beside? I, for my part,
Should look for something of discomfiture
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly
And been so paid for it.
Holland. He 'll keep at York:
All will blow over: he 'll return no worse,
Humbled a little, thankful for a place
Under as good a man. Oh, we 'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

STRAFFORD *enters*

Queen. You here!
Strafford. The King sends for me, madam.
Queen. Sir,
The King . . .
Strafford. An urgent matter that imports the
King!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Why, Lucy, what 's in agitation now,

That all this muttering and shrugging, see,
Begins at me? They do not speak!
Lady Carlisle. T is welcome!
For we are proud of you—happy and proud
To have you with us, Strafford! You were staunch
At Durham: you did well there! Had you not
Been stayed, you might have . . . we said, even now,
Our hope 's in you!
Vane [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. The Queen would speak with you.
Strafford. Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe
To signify my presence to the King?
Savile. An urgent matter?
Strafford. None that touches you,
Lord Savile! Say, it were some treacherous
Sly pitiful intriguing with the Scots—
You would go free, at least! (They half divine
My purpose!) Madam, shall I see the King?
The service I would render, much concerns
His welfare.
Queen. But his Majesty, my lord,
May not be here, may . . .
Strafford. Its importance, then,
Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,
And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.
Queen [*who has been conversing with* VANE *and* HOLLAND]. The King will see you, sir!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Mark me: Pym's worst
Is done by now: he has impeached the Earl,
Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.
Let us not seem instructed! We should work
No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves
With shame in the world's eye. [*To* STRAFFORD.] His Majesty
Has much to say with you.

Strafford. Time fleeting, too!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] No means of getting them away? And She—
What does she whisper? Does she know my purpose?
What does she think of it? Get them away!
Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE.] He comes to baffle Pym—he thinks the danger
Far off: tell him no word of it! a time
For help will come; we 'll not be wanting then.
Keep him in play, Lucy—you, self-possessed
And calm! [*To* STRAFFORD.] To spare your lordship some delay
I will myself acquaint the King. [*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Beware!
[*The* QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND, *and* SAVILE *go out.*
Strafford. She knows it?
Lady Carlisle. Tell me, Strafford!
Strafford. Afterward!
This moment 's the great moment of all time.
She knows my purpose?
Lady Carlisle. Thoroughly: just now
She bade me hide it from you.
Strafford. Quick, dear child,
The whole o' the scheme?
Lady Carlisle. (Ah, he would learn if they
Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but
Have once apprised the King! But there's no time
For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the whole is known.
Strafford. Known and approved?
Lady Carlisle. Hardly discountenanced.
Strafford. And the King—say, the King consents as well?
Lady Carlisle. The King 's not yet informed, but will not dare
To interpose.

Strafford. What need to wait him, then?
He 'll sanction it! I stayed, child, tell him, long!
It vexed me to the soul—this waiting here.
You know him, there 's no counting on the King.
Tell him I waited long!
Lady Carlisle. (What can he mean? Rejoice at the King's hollowness?)
Strafford. I knew
They would be glad of it,—all over once,
I knew they would be glad: but he 'd contrive,
The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,
An angel's making.
Lady Carlisle. (Is he mad?) Dear Strafford,
You were not wont to look so happy.
Strafford. Sweet,
I tried obedience thoroughly. I took
The King's wild plan: of course, ere I could reach
My army, Conway ruined it. I drew
The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,
And would have fought the Scots: the King at once
Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,
God put it in my mind to love, serve, die
For Charles, but never to obey him more!
While he endured their insolence at Ripon
I fell on them at Durham. But you 'll tell
The King I waited? All the anteroom
Is filled with my adherents.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford—Strafford,
What daring act is this you hint?
Strafford. No, no!
T is here, not daring if you knew? all here!
[*Drawing papers from his breast.*
Full proof, see, ample proof—does the Queen know
I have such damning proof? Bedford and Essex,
Brooke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile?

The simper that I spoilt?), Saye, Mandeville—
Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym!
Lady Carlisle. Great heaven!
Strafford. From Savile and his lords, to Pym
And his losels, crushed!—Pym shall not ward the blow
Nor Savile creep aside from it! The Crew
And the Cabal—I crush them!
Lady Carlisle. And you go—
Strafford,—and now you go?—
Strafford. —About no work
In the background, I promise you! I go
Straight to the House of Lords to claim these knaves.
Mainwaring!
Lady Carlisle. Stay—stay, Strafford!
Strafford. She 'll return,
The Queen—some little project of her own!
No time to lose: the King takes fright perhaps.
Lady Carlisle. Pym 's strong, remember!
Strafford. Very strong, as fits
The Faction's head—with no offence to Hampden,
Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis: one
And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
In just equality. Bryan! Mainwaring!
[*Many of his* Adherents *enter.*
The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
On the Scots' war; my visit 's opportune.
When all is over, Bryan, you proceed
To Ireland: these dispatches, mark me, Bryan,
Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond:
We want the army here—my army, raised
At such a cost, that should have done such good,
And was inactive all the time! no matter,
We 'll find a use for it. Willis . . . or, no—you!
You, friend, make haste to York: bear this, at once . . .

Or,—better stay for form's sake, see yourself
The news you carry. You remain with me
To execute the Parliament's command,
Mainwaring! Help to seize these lesser knaves,
Take care there 's no escaping at backdoors:
I 'll not have one escape, mind me—not one!
I seem revengeful, Lucy? Did you know
What these men dare!
Lady Carlisle. It is so much they dare!
Strafford. I proved that long ago; my turn is now.
Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens!
Observe who harbours any of the brood
That scramble off: be sure they smart for it!
Our coffers are but lean.
And you, child, too,
Shall have your task; deliver this to Laud.
Laud will not be the slowest in my praise:
"Thorough" he 'll cry!—Foolish, to be so glad!
This life is gay and glowing, after all:
'T is worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day
Is worth the living for.
Lady Carlisle. That reddening brow!
You seem . . .
Strafford. Well—do I not? I would be well—
I could not but be well on such a day!
And, this day ended, 't is of slight import
How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul
In Strafford.
Lady Carlisle. Noble Strafford!
Strafford. No farewell!
I 'll see you anon, to-morrow—the first thing.
—If She should come to stay me!
Lady Carlisle. Go—'t is nothing—
Only my heart that swells: it has been thus
Ere now: go, Strafford!

Strafford. To-night, then, let it be.
I must see Him: you, the next after Him.
I 'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends!
You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour
To talk of all your lives. Close after me!
"My friend of friends!"
[STRAFFORD *and the rest go out.*
Lady Carlisle. The King—ever the King!
No thought of one beside, whose little word
Unveils the King to him—one word from me,
Which yet I do not breathe!
Ah, have I spared
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward
Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way
He is the better for my love. No, no—
He would not look so joyous—I 'll believe
His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III.—*The Antechamber of the House of Lords*

Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents *of* STRAFFORD, *etc.*

A Group of Presbyterians.—1. I tell you he struck Maxwell: Maxwell sought
To stay the Earl: he struck him and passed on.
2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance
Before these rufflers.
3. Strafford here the first,
With the great army at his back!
4. No doubt.
I would Pym had made haste: that 's Bryan, hush—
The gallant pointing.

Strafford's Followers.—1. Mark these worthies, now!
2. A goodly gathering! "Where the carcass is
"There shall the eagles"—what 's the rest?
3. For eagles
Say crows.
A Presbyterian. Stand back, sirs!
One of Strafford's Followers. Are we in Geneva?
A Presbyterian. No, nor in Ireland; we have leave to breathe.
One of Strafford's Followers. Truly? Behold how privileged we be
That serve "King Pym"! There 's Some-one at Whitehall
Who skulks obscure; but Pym struts . . .
The Presbyterian. Nearer.
A Follower of Strafford. Higher,
We look to see him. [*To his* Companions.] I 'm to have St. John
In charge; was he among the knaves just now
That followed Pym within there?
Another. The gaunt man
Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect
Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

MAXWELL *enters*

Another. Why, man, they rush into the net! Here 's Maxwell—
Ha, Maxwell? How the brethren flock around
The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?
Maxwell. Gentlemen,
Stand back! a great thing passes here.
A Follower of Strafford. [*To another.*] The Earl
Is at his work! [*To* M.] Say, Maxwell, what great thing!

Speak out! [*To a* Presbyterian.] Friend, I 've a
kindness for you! Friend,
I 've seen you with St. John: O stockishness!
Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind
St. John's head in a charger? How, the plague,
Not laugh?
Another. Say, Maxwell, what great thing!
Another. Nay, wait:
The jest will be to wait.
First. And who 's to bear
These demure hypocrites? You 'd swear they
came . . .
Came . . . just as we come!
[*A* Puritan *enters hastily and without observing* STRAFFORD'S Followers.
The Puritan. How goes on the work?
Has Pym . . .
A Follower of Strafford. The secret 's out at
last. Aha,
The carrion 's scented! Welcome, crow the first!
Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye!
"King Pym has fallen!"
The Puritan. Pym?
A Strafford. Pym!
A Presbyterian. Only Pym?
Many of Strafford's Followers. No, brother, not
Pym only; Vane as well,
Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as well!
A Presbyterian. My mind misgives: can it be
true?
Another. Lost! Lost!
A Strafford. Say we true, Maxwell?
The Puritan. Pride before destruction,
A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.
Many of Strafford's Followers. Ah now! The
very thing! A word in season!

A golden apple in a silver picture,
To greet Pym as he passes!

[*The doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.*

Maxwell. Stand back, all!

Many of the Presbyterians. I hold with Pym! And I!

Strafford's Followers. Now for the text!

He comes! Quick!

The Puritan. How hath the oppressor ceased!
The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked!
The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote
The people in wrath with a continual stroke,
That ruled the nations in his anger—he
Is persecuted and none hindereth!

[*The doors open, and* STRAFFORD *issues in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of* "Void the house!"

Strafford. Impeach me! Pym! I never struck, I think,
The felon on that calm insulting mouth
When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . . God!
Was it a word, only a word that held
The outrageous blood back on my heart—which beats!
Which beats! Some one word—"Traitor," did he say,
Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
Upon me?

Maxwell. In the Commons' name, their servant
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

Strafford. What did you say?

Maxwell. The Commons bid me ask your lordship's sword.

Strafford. Let us go forth: follow me, gentlemen!

Draw your swords too: cut any down that bar us.
On the King's service! Maxwell, clear the way!
[*The* Presbyterians *prepare to dispute his passage.*
Strafford. I stay: the King himself shall see me here.
Your tablets, fellow!
[*To* MAINWARING.] Give that to the King!
Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be!
Nay, you shall take my sword!
[MAXWELL *advances to take it.*
Or, no—not that!
Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far,
All up to that—not that! Why, friend, you see
When the King lays your head beneath my foot
It will not pay for that. Go, all of you!
Maxwell. I dare, my lord, to disobey: none stir!
Strafford. This gentle Maxwell!—Do not touch him, Bryan!
[*To the* Presbyterians.] Whichever cur of you will carry this
Escapes his fellow's fate. None saves his life?
None? [*Cries from within of* "STRAFFORD!"
Slingsby, I 've loved you at least: make haste!
Stab me! I have not time to tell you why.
You then, my Bryan! Mainwaring, you then!
Is it because I spoke so hastily
At Allerton? The King had vexed me.
[*To the* Presbyterians.] You!
—Not even you? If I live over this,
The King is sure to have your heads, you know!
But what if I can't live this minute through?
Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile!
[*Louder cries of* "STRAFFORD!"
The King! I troubled him, stood in the way

Of his negotiations, was the one
Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy
Of Scotland: and he sent for me, from York,
My safety guaranteed—having prepared
A Parliament—I see! And at Whitehall
The Queen was whispering with Vane—I see
The trap! [*Tearing off the George.*
I tread a gewgaw underfoot,
And cast a memory from me. One stroke, now!
[*His own* Adherents *disarm him. Renewed cries of* "STRAFFORD!"
England! I see thy arm in this and yield.
Pray you now—Pym awaits me—pray you now!
[STRAFFORD *reaches the doors: they open wide.*
HAMPDEN *and a crowd discovered, and, at the bar,* PYM *standing apart. As* STRAFFORD *kneels, the scene shuts.*

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*Whitehall*

The KING, *the* QUEEN, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND, SAVILE, *in the background*)

Lady Carlisle. Answer them, Hollis, for his sake! One word!

Charles. [*To* HOLLIS.] You stand, silent and cold, as though I were
Deceiving you—my friend, my playfellow
Of other times. What wonder after all?
Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.

Hollis. Sir,
It is yourself that you deceive, not me.
You 'll quit me comforted, your mind made up
That, since you 've talked thus much and grieved thus much,
All you can do for Strafford has been done.

Queen. If you kill Strafford—(come, we grant you leave,
Suppose)—

Hollis. I may withdraw, sir?

Lady Carlisle. Hear them out!
'T is the last chance for Strafford! Hear them out!

Hollis. "If we kill Strafford"—on the eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial—"We!"

Charles. Pym, my good Hollis—
Pym, I should say!

Hollis. Ah, true—sir, pardon me!
You witness our proceedings every day;
But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us,
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view.
Still, on my honour, sir, the rest of the place
Is not unoccupied. The Commons sit
—That 's England; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,
Their representatives; the Peers that judge
Are easily distinguished; one remarks
The People here and there: but the close curtain
Must hide so much!

Queen. Acquaint your insolent crew,
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside!
It served a purpose.

Hollis. Think! This very day?
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself?

Charles. I will defend him, sir!—sanction the past
This day: it ever was my purpose. Rage
At me, not Strafford!

Lady Carlisle. Nobly!—will he not
Do nobly?

Hollis. Sir, you will do honestly;
And, for that deed, I too would be a king.

Charles. Only, to do this now!—"deaf" (in your style)
"To subjects' prayers,"—I must oppose them now!
It seems their will the trial should proceed,—
So palpably their will!

Hollis. You peril much,
But it were no bright moment save for that.
Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree
Which props this quaking House of Privilege,
(Floods come, winds beat, and see—the treacherous sand!)

Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an arm
Could save him, you 'd save Strafford.
Charles. And they dare
Consummate calmly this great wrong! No hope?
This ineffaceable wrong? No pity then?
Hollis. No plague in store for perfidy?—Farewell!
You called me, sir—[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] you, lady, bade me come
To save the Earl: I came, thank God for it,
To learn how far such perfidy can go!
You, sir, concert with me on saving him
Who have just ruined Strafford!
Charles. I?—and how?
Hollis. Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,
Pym's charges back: a blind moth-eaten law!
—He 'll break from it at last: and whom to thank?
The mouse that gnawed the lion's net for him
Got a good friend,—but he, the other mouse,
That looked on while the lion freed himself——
Fared he so well, does any fable say?
Charles. What can you mean?
Hollis. Pym never could have proved
Strafford's design of bringing up the troops
To force this kingdom to obedience: Vane—
Your servant, not our friend, has proved it.
Charles. Vane?
Hollis. This day. Did Vane deliver up or no
Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,
Seal Strafford's fate?
Charles. Sir, as I live, I know
Nothing that Vane has done! What treason next?
I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the truth!
Ask Vane himself!

Hollis. I will not speak to Vane,
Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day.
Queen. Speak to Vane's master then! What gain to him
Were Strafford's death?
Hollis. Ha? Strafford cannot turn
As you, sir, sit there—bid you forth, demand
If every hateful act were not set down
In his commission?—whether you contrived
Or no, that all the violence should seem
His work, the gentle ways—your own,—his part,
To counteract the King's kind impulses—
While . . . but you know what he could say! And then
He might produce,—mark, sir!—a certain charge
To set the King's express command aside,
If need were, and be blameless. He might add . . .
Charles. Enough!
Hollis. —Who bade him break the Parliament,
Find some pretence for setting up sword-law!
Queen. Retire!
Charles. Once more, whatever Vane dared do,
I know not: he is rash, a fool—I know
Nothing of Vane!
Hollis. Well—I believe you. Sir,
Believe me, in return, that . . .
[*Turning to* Lady CARLISLE.] Gentle lady,
The few words I would say, the stones might hear
Sooner than these,—I rather speak to you,
You, with the heart! The question, trust me, takes
Another shape, to-day: not, if the King
Or England shall succumb,—but, who shall pay
The forfeit, Strafford or his master. Sir,
You loved me once: think on my warning now! [*Goes out.*

Charles. On you and on your warning both!—
Carlisle!
That paper!
Queen. But consider!
Charles. Give it me!
There, signed—will that content you? Do not
speak!
You have betrayed me, Vane! See! any day,
According to the tenor of that paper,
He bids your brother bring the army up,
Strafford shall head it and take full revenge.
Seek Strafford! Let him have the same, before
He rises to defend himself!
Queen. In truth?
That your shrewd Hollis should have worked a
change
Like this! You, late reluctant . . .
Charles. Say, Carlisle,
Your brother Percy brings the army up,
Falls on the Parliament——(I 'll think of you,
My Hollis!) say, we plotted long—'t is mine,
The scheme is mine, remember! Say, I cursed
Vane's folly in your hearing! If the Earl
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie
With you, Carlisle!
Lady Carlisle. Nay, fear not me! but still
That 's a bright moment, sir, you throw away.
Tear down the veil and save him!
Queen. Go, Carlisle!
Lady Carlisle. (I shall see Strafford—speak to
him: my heart
Must never beat so, then! And if I tell
The truth? What 's gained by falsehood? There
they stand
Whose trade it is, whose life it is! How vain

To gild such rottenness! Strafford shall know,
Thoroughly know them!)
Queen. Trust to me! [*To* CARLISLE.] Carlisle,
You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,
To serve poor Strafford: this bold plan of yours
Merits much praise, and yet . . .
Lady Carlisle. Time presses, madam.
Queen. Yet—may it not be something premature?
Strafford defends himself to-day—reserves
Some wondrous effort, one may well suppose!
Lady Carlisle. Ay, Hollis hints as much.
Charles. Why linger then?
Haste with the scheme—my scheme: I shall be there
To watch his look. Tell him I watch his look!
Queen. Stay, we 'll precede you!
Lady Carlisle. At your pleasure.
Charles. Say—
Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!
I shall be there, remember!
Lady Carlisle. Doubt me not.
Charles. On our return, Carlisle, we wait you here!
Lady Carlisle. I 'll bring his answer. Sir, I follow you.
(Prove the King faithless, and I take away
All Strafford cares to live for: let it be——
'T is the King's scheme!
My Strafford, I can save,
Nay, I have saved you, yet am scarce content,
Because my poor name will not cross your mind.
Strafford, how much I am unworthy you!)

SCENE II.—*A Passage adjoining Westminster Hall*

Many Groups of Spectators *of the Trial.* Officers *of the Court, etc.*

1st Spectator. More crowd than ever! Not know Hampden, man?
That 's he, by Pym, Pym that is speaking now.
No, truly, if you look so high you 'll see
Little enough of either!
2nd Spectator. Stay: Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod.
3rd Spectator. Ay, ay, we 've heard
Some pretty speaking: yet the Earl escapes.
4th Spectator. I fear it: just a foolish word or two
About his children—and we see, forsooth,
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the man
Who, sick, half-blind . . .
2nd Spectator. What 's that Pym 's saying now
Which makes the curtains flutter? look! A hand
Clutches them. Ah! The King's hand!
5th Spectator. I had thought
Pym was not near so tall. What said he, friend?
2nd Spectator. "Nor is this way a novel way of blood,"
And the Earl turns as if to . . . look! look!
Many Spectators. There!
What ails him? no—he rallies, see—goes on,
And Strafford smiles. Strange!
An Officer. Haselrig!
Many Spectators. Friend? Friend?
The Officer. Lost, utterly lost: just when we looked for Pym

To make a stand against the ill effects
Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig without?
Pym's message is to him.
3rd Spectator. Now, said I true?
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?
1st Spectator. Never believe it, man! These notes of Vane's
Ruin the Earl.
5th Spectator. A brave end: not a whit
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the trial
Is closed. No—Strafford means to speak again?
An Officer. Stand back, there!
5th Spectator. Why, the Earl is coming hither!
Before the court breaks up! His brother, look,—
You 'd say he 'd deprecated some fierce act
In Strafford's mind just now.
An Officer. Stand back, I say!
2nd *Spectator.* Who 's the veiled woman that he talks with?
Many Spectators. Hush—
The Earl! the Earl!

[*Enter* STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, *and other* Secretaries, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, *etc.* STRAFFORD *converses with* Lady CARLISLE.

Hollis. So near the end! Be patient—
Return!
Strafford [*to his* Secretaries]. Here—anywhere —or, 't is freshest here!
To spend one's April here, the blossom-month:
Set it down here!

[*They arrange a table, papers, etc.*

So, Pym can quail, can cower
Because I glance at him, yet more 's to do?
What 's to be answered, Slingsby? Let us end!

[*To* LADY CARLISLE.] Child, I refuse his offer; whatsoe'er
It be! Too late! Tell me no word of him!
'T is something, Hollis, I assure you that—
To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days
Fighting for life and fame against a pack
Of very curs, that lie through thick and thin,
Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say
"Strafford" if it would take my life!
Lady Carlisle. Be moved!
Glance at the paper!
Strafford. Already at my heels!
Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again.
Peace, child! Now, Slingsby!
[Messengers *from* LANE *and other of* STRAFFORD'S Counsel *within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.*
Strafford [*setting himself to write and dictate*]. I shall beat you, Hollis!
Do you know that? In spite of St. John's tricks,
In spite of Pym—your Pym who shrank from me!
Eliot would have contrived it otherwise.
[*To a* Messenger.] In truth? This slip, tell Lane, contains as much
As I can call to mind about the matter.
Eliot would have disdained . . .
[*Calling after the* Messenger.] And Radcliffe, say,
The only person who could answer Pym,
Is safe in prison, just for that.
Well, well!
It had not been recorded in that case,
I baffled you.
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Nay, child, why look so grieved?
All 's gained without the King! You saw Pym quail?

What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,
But tranquilly resume my task as though
Nothing had intervened since I proposed
To call that traitor to account! Such tricks,
Trust me, shall not be played a second time,
Nor even against Laud, with his grey hair—
Your good work, Hollis! Peace! To make amends,
You, Lucy, shall be here when I impeach
Pym and his fellows.
Hollis. Wherefore not protest
Against our whole proceeding, long ago?
Why feel indignant now? Why stand this while
Enduring patiently?
Strafford. Child, I'll tell you—
You, and not Pym—you, the slight graceful girl
Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis—
Why I stood patient! I was fool enough
To see the will of England in Pym's will;
To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait
Her judgment: when, behold, in place of it . . .
[*To a* Messenger *who whispers.*] Tell Lane to answer no such question! Law,—
I grapple with their law! I 'm here to try
My actions by their standard, not my own!
Their law allowed that levy: what 's the rest
To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me?
Lady Carlisle. The King 's so weak! Secure this chance! 'T was Vane,
Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes . . .
Strafford. Fit,—very fit, those precious notes of Vane,
To close the Trial worthily! I feared
Some spice of nobleness might linger yet
And spoil the character of all the past.
Vane eased me . . . and I will go back and say
As much—to Pym, to England! Follow me!

I have a word to say! There, my defence
Is done!
Stay! why be proud? Why care to own
My gladness, my surprise?—Nay, not surprise!
Wherefore insist upon the little pride
Of doing all myself, and sparing him
The pain? Child, say the triumph is my King's!
When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down,
One image was before me: could I fail?
Child, care not for the past, so indistinct,
Obscure—there 's nothing to forgive in it,
'T is so forgotten! From this day begins
A new life, founded on a new belief
In Charles.

Hollis. In Charles? Rather believe in Pym?
And here he comes in proof! Appeal to Pym!
Say how unfair . . .

Strafford. To Pym? I would say nothing!
I would not look upon Pym's face again.

Lady Carlisle. Stay, let me have to think I pressed your hand!

[STRAFFORD *and his friends go out.*

Enter HAMPDEN *and* VANE

Vane. O Hampden, save the great misguided man!
Plead Strafford's cause with Pym! I have remarked
He moved no muscle when we all declaimed
Against him: you had but to breathe—he turned
Those kind calm eyes upon you.

[*Enter* PYM, *the* Solicitor-General ST. JOHN, *the* Managers *of the Trial*, FIENNES, RUDYARD, *etc.*

Rudyard. Horrible!
Till now all hearts were with you: I withdraw

For one. Too horrible! But we mistake
Your purpose, Pym: you cannot snatch away
The last spar from the drowning man.
Fiennes. He talks
With St. John of it—see, how quietly!
[*To other* Presbyterians.] You 'll join us? Strafford may deserve the worst:
But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take heart?
This Bill of his Attainder shall not have
One true man's hand to it.
Vane. Consider, Pym!
Confront your Bill, your own Bill: what is it?
You cannot catch the Earl on any charge,—
No man will say the law has hold of him
On any charge; and therefore you resolve
To take the general sense on his desert,
As though no law existed, and we met
To found one. You refer to Parliament
To speak its thought upon the abortive mass
Of half-borne-out assertions, dubious hints
Hereafter to be cleared, distortions—ay,
And wild inventions. Every man is saved
The task of fixing any single charge
On Strafford: he has but to see in him
The enemy of England.
Pym. A right scruple!
I have heard some called England's enemy
With less consideration.
Vane. Pity me!
Indeed you made me think I was your friend!
I who have murdered Strafford, how remove
That memory from me?
Pym. I absolve you, Vane.
Take you no care for ought that you have done!
Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill! Reject this Bill!

He staggers through the ordeal : let him go,
Strew no fresh fire before him ! Plead for us !
When Strafford spoke, your eyes were thick with tears !
Hampden. England speaks louder : who are we, to play
The generous pardoner at her expense,
Magnanimously waive advantages,
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill ?
Vane. He was your friend.
Pym. I have heard that before.
Fiennes. And England trusts you.
Hampden. Shame be his, who turns
The opportunity of serving her
She trusts him with, to his own mean account—
Who would look nobly frank at her expense !
Fiennes. I never thought it could have come to this.
Pym. But I have made myself familiar, Fiennes,
With this one thought—have walked, and sat, and slept,
This thought before me. I have done such things,
Being the chosen man that should destroy
The traitor. You have taken up this thought
To play with, for a gentle stimulant,
To give a dignity to idler life
By the dim prospect of emprise to come,
But ever with the softening, sure belief,
That all would end some strange way right at last.
Fiennes. Had we made out some weightier charge!
Pym. You say
That these are petty charges : can we come
To the real charge at all ? There he is safe
In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy
Is not a crime, treachery not a crime :
The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you speak

The words, but where 's the power to take revenge
Upon them? We must make occasion serve,—
The oversight shall pay for the main sin
That mocks us.
Rudyard. But this unexampled course,
This Bill!
Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
Of precedent and custom, and at once
Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon
The guilt of Strafford: each man lay his hand
Upon his breast, and judge!
Vane. I only see
Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all beyond!
Rudyard and others. Forgive him! He would join us, now he finds
What the King counts reward! The pardon, too,
Should be your own. Yourself should bear to Strafford
The pardon of the Commons.
Pym. Meet him? Strafford?
Have we to meet once more, then? Be it so!
And yet—the prophecy seemed half fulfilled
When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,
Our friendship, divers thoughts came back at once
And left me, for a time . . . 'T is very sad!
To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane—to-morrow?
Vane. Not before to-morrow—
So, time enough! I knew you would relent!
Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you introduce
The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me!

SCENE III.—*Whitehall*

The KING

Charles. My loyal servant! To defend himself
Thus irresistibly,—withholding aught
That seemed to implicate us!
We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the future
Must recompense the past.
She tarries long.
I understand you, Strafford, now!
The scheme—
Carlisle's mad scheme—he 'll sanction it, I fear,
For love of me. 'T was too precipitate:
Before the army 's fairly on its march,
He 'll be at large: no matter.
Well, Carlisle?

Enter PYM

Pym. Fear me not, sir:—my mission is to save,
This time.
Charles. To break thus on me! Unannounced!
Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.
Charles. No more
Of Strafford! I have heard too much from you.
Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People; will you hear
A word upon my own account?
Charles. Of Strafford?
(So turns the tide already? Have we tamed
The insolent brawler?—Strafford's eloquence
Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,
Has spoken for himself.

Pym. Sufficiently.
I would apprise you of the novel course
The People take: the Trial fails.
Charles. Yes, yes:
We are aware, sir: for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.
Pym. Pray you, read
This schedule! I would learn from your own mouth
—(It is a matter much concerning me)—
Whether, if two Estates of us concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth
Within that parchment, you, sir, can resolve
To grant your own consent to it. This Bill
Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,
That England's manifested will should guide
Your judgment, ere another week such will
Shall manifest itself. If not,—I cast
Aside the measure.
Charles. You can hinder, then,
The introduction of this Bill?
Pym. I can.
Charles. He is my friend, sir: I have wronged him: mark you,
Had I not wronged him, this might be. You think
Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away,
We know you hate him)—no one else could love
Strafford: but he has saved me, some affirm.
Think of his pride! And do you know one strange,
One frightful thing? We all have used the man
As though a drudge of ours, with not a source
Of happy thoughts except in us; and yet
Strafford has wife and children, household cares,
Just as if we had never been. Ah sir,
You are moved, even you, a solitary man
Wed to your cause—to England if you will!

Pym. Yes—think, my soul—to England! Draw not back!
Charles. Prevent that Bill, sir! All your course seems fair
Till now. Why, in the end, 't is I should sign
The warrant for his death! You have said much
I ponder on; I never meant, indeed,
Strafford should serve me any more. I take
The Commons' counsel; but this Bill is yours—
Nor worthy of its leader: care not, sir,
For that, however! I will quite forget
You named it to me. You are satisfied?
Pym. Listen to me, sir! Eliot laid his hand,
Wasted and white upon my forehead once;
Wentworth—he 's gone now!—has talked on, whole nights,
And I beside him; Hampden loves me: sir,
How can I breathe and not wish England well,
And her King well?
Charles. I thank you, sir, who leave
That King his servant. Thanks, sir!
Pym. Let me speak
—Who may not speak again; whose spirit yearns
For a cool night after this weary day:
—Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet
In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe.
I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,
After this trial, alone, as man to man—
I might say something, warn you, pray you, save—
Mark me, King Charles, save——you!
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir—
(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)
As you would have no deeper question moved
—"How long the Many must endure the One,"
Assure me, sir, if England give assent

To Strafford's death, you will not interfere!
Or——
Charles. God forsakes me. I am in a net
And cannot move. Let all be as you say!

Enter Lady CARLISLE

Lady Carlisle. He loves you—looking beautiful with joy
Because you sent me! he would spare you all
The pain! he never dreamed you would forsake
Your servant in the evil day—nay, see
Your scheme returned! That generous heart of his!
He needs it not—or, needing it, disdains
A course that might endanger you—you, sir,
Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .
[*Seeing* PYM.] Well met!
No fear for Strafford! All that 's true and brave
On your own side shall help us: we are now
Stronger than ever.
Ha—what, sir, is this?
All is not well! What parchment have you there?
Pym. Sir, much is saved us both.
Lady Carlisle. This Bill! Your lip
Whitens—you could not read one line to me
Your voice would falter so!
Pym. No recreant yet!
The great word went from England to my soul,
And I arose. The end is very near.
Lady Carlisle. I am to save him! All have shrunk beside;
'T is only I am left. Heaven will make strong
The hand now as the heart. Then let both die!

ACT V

SCENE I.—*Whitehall*

HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE

Hollis. Tell the King then! Come in with me!
Lady Carlisle. Not so!
He must not hear till it succeeds.
Hollis. Succeed?
No dream was half so vain—you 'd rescue Strafford
And outwit Pym! I cannot tell you . . . lady,
The block pursues me, and the hideous show.
To-day . . . is it to-day? And all the while
He 's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I have
To tell this man he is to die. The King
May rend his hair, for me! I 'll not see Strafford!
Lady Carlisle. Only, if I succeed, remember——
Charles
Has saved him. He would hardly value life
Unless his gift. My staunch friends wait. Go in—
You must go in to Charles!
Hollis. And all beside
Left Strafford long ago. The King has signed
The warrant for his death! the Queen was sick
Of the eternal subject. For the Court,—
The Trial was amusing in its way,
Only too much of it: the Earl withdrew
In time. But you, fragile, alone, so young
Amid rude mercenaries—you devise
A plan to save him! Even though it fails,
What shall reward you?

Lady Carlisle. I may go, you think,
To France with him? And you reward me, friend,
Who lived with Strafford even from his youth
Before he set his heart on state-affairs
And they bent down that noble brow of his.
I have learned somewhat of his latter life,
And all the future I shall know: but, Hollis,
I ought to make his youth my own as well.
Tell me,——when he is saved!
Hollis. My gentle friend,
He should know all and love you, but 't is vain!
Lady Carlisle. Love? no—too late now! Let him love the King!
'T is the King's scheme! I have your word, remember!
We 'll keep the old delusion up. But, quick!
Quick! Each of us has work to do, beside!
Go to the King! I hope—Hollis—I hope!
Say nothing of my scheme! Hush, while we speak
Think where he is! Now for my gallant friends!
Hollis. Where he is? Calling wildly upon Charles,
Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.
Let the King tell him! I 'll not look on Strafford.

SCENE II.—*The Tower*

STRAFFORD *sitting with his* Children. *They sing*

O bell' andare
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera!

William. The boat 's in the broad moonlight all this while—

Verso la sera
Di Primavera!

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon
Into the shadowy distance; only still
You hear the dipping oar—

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all 's quite gone,
Music and light and all, like a lost star.
Anne. But you should sleep, father: you were to sleep.
Strafford. I do sleep, Anne; or if not—you must know
There 's such a thing as . . .
William. You 're too tired to sleep?
Strafford. It will come by-and-by and all day long,
In that old quiet house I told you of:
We sleep safe there.
Anne. Why not in Ireland?
Strafford. No!
Too many dreams!—That song 's for Venice, William:
You know how Venice looks upon the map—
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?
William. You 've been to Venice, father?
Strafford. I was young, then.
William. A city with no King; that 's why I like
Even a song that comes from Venice.
Strafford. William!
William. Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the King?
But I 'll see Venice for myself one day.
Strafford. See many lands, boy—England last of all,—
That way you 'll love her best.
William. Why do men say
You sought to ruin her then?

Strafford. Ah,—they say that.
William. Why?
Strafford. I suppose they must have words to say,
As you to sing.
Anne. But they make songs beside:
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,
That called you . . . Oh, the names!
William. Don't mind her, father!
They soon left off when I cried out to them.
Strafford. We shall so soon be out of it, my boy!
'T is not worth while: who heeds a foolish song?
William. Why, not the King.
Strafford. Well: it has been the fate
Of better; and yet,—wherefore not feel sure
That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend
All the fantastic day's caprice, consign
To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,
And raise the Genius on his orb again,—
That Time will do me right?
Anne. (Shall we sing, William?
He does not look thus when we sing.)
Strafford. For Ireland,
Something is done: too little, but enough
To show what might have been.
William. (I have no heart
To sing now! Anne, how very sad he looks!
Oh, I so hate the King for all he says!)
Strafford. Forsook them! What, the common songs will run
That I forsook the People? Nothing more?
Ay, Fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,
Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves
Noisy to be enrolled,—will register
The curious glosses, subtle notices,
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see
Beside that plain inscription of The Name—

The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford!

[*The* Children *resume their song timidly, but break off.*

Enter HOLLIS *and an* Attendant

Strafford. No,—Hollis? in good time!—Who is he?

Hollis. One
That must be present.

Strafford. Ah—I understand.
They will not let me see poor Laud alone.
How politic! They 'd use me by degrees
To solitude: and, just as you came in,
I was solicitous what life to lead
When Strafford 's "not so much as Constable
"In the King's service." Is there any means
To keep oneself awake? What would you do
After this bustle, Hollis, in my place?

Hollis. Strafford!

Strafford. Observe, not but that Pym and you
Will find me news enough—news I shall hear
Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side
At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged
My newsman. Or, a better project now—
What if when all 's consummated, and the Saints
Reign, and the Senate's work goes swimmingly,—
What if I venture up, some day, unseen,
To saunter through the Town, notice how Pym,
Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly
Into a tavern, hear a point discussed,
As, whether Strafford's name were John or James—
And be myself appealed to—I, who shall
Myself have near forgotten!

Hollis. I would speak . . .

Strafford. Then you shall speak,—not now.
I want just now,

To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place
Is full of ghosts.
Hollis. Nay, you must hear me, Strafford!
Strafford. Oh, readily! Only, one rare thing more,—
The minister! Who will advise the King,
Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu and what not,
And yet have health—children, for aught I know—
My patient pair of traitors! Ah,—but, William—
Does not his cheek grow thin?
William. 'T is you look thin,
Father!
Strafford. A scamper o'er the breezy wolds
Sets all to-rights.
Hollis. You cannot sure forget
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?
Strafford. No,
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.
I left you that. Well, Hollis? Say at once,
The King can find no time to set me free!
A mask at Theobald's?
Hollis. Hold: no such affair
Detains him.
Strafford. True: what needs so great a matter?
The Queen's lip may be sore. Well: when he pleases,—
Only, I want the air: it vexes flesh
To be pent up so long.
Hollis. The King—I bear
His message, Strafford: pray you, let me speak!
Strafford. Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again! [*The* Children *retire.*
They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
I know your message: you have nothing new
To tell me: from the first I guessed as much.
I know, instead of coming here himself,

Leading me forth in public by the hand,
The King prefers to leave the door ajar
As though I were escaping—bids me trudge
While the mob gapes upon some show prepared
On the other side of the river! Give at once
His order of release! I 've heard, as well,
Of certain poor manœuvres to avoid
The granting pardon at his proper risk;
First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords,
Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
And far from blaming them, and . . . Where 's
the order?
Hollis. Spare me!
Strafford. Why, he 'd not have me steal away?
With an old doublet and a steeple hat
Like Prynne's? Besmuggled into France, perhaps?
Hollis, 't is for my children! 'T was for them
I first consented to stand day by day
And give your Puritans the best of words,
Be patient, speak when called upon, observe
Their rules, and not return them prompt their lie!
What 's in that boy of mine that he should prove
Son to a prison-breaker? I shall stay
And he 'll stay with me. Charles should know as
much,
He too has children!
[*Turning to* HOLLIS's Companion.] Sir, you feel
for me!
No need to hide that face! Though it have looked
Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know
Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .
Your coming has my pardon, nay, my thanks:
For there is one who comes not.
Hollis. Whom forgive,
As one to die!

Strafford. True, all die, and all need
Forgiveness: I forgive him from my soul.
Hollis. 'T is a world's wonder: Strafford, you must die!
Strafford. Sir, if your errand is to set me free
This heartless jest mars much. Ha! Tears in truth?
We 'll end this! See this paper, warm—feel—warm
With lying next my heart! Whose hand is there?
Whose promise? Read, and loud for God to hear!
"Strafford shall take no hurt"—read it, I say!
"In person, honour, nor estate"—
Hollis. The King . . .
Strafford. I could unking him by a breath! You sit
Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy
The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace
If I 'd renounce the King: and I stood firm
On the King's faith. The King who lives . . .
Hollis. To sign
The warrant for your death.
Strafford. "Put not your trust
"In princes, neither in the sons of men,
"In whom is no salvation!"
Hollis. Trust in God!
The scaffold is prepared: they wait for you:
He has consented. Cast the earth behind!
Charles. You would not see me, Strafford, at your foot!
It was wrung from me! Only, curse me not!
Hollis [*to* STRAFFORD]. As you hope grace and pardon in your need,
Be merciful to this most wretched man.
[*Voices from within.*

Strafford. You 'll be good to those children, sir?
I know
You 'll not believe her, even should the Queen
Think they take after one they rarely saw.
I had intended that my son should live
A stranger to these matters: but you are
So utterly deprived of friends! He too
Must serve you—will you not be good to him?
Or, stay, sir, do not promise—do not swear!
You, Hollis—do the best you can for me!
I 've not a soul to trust to: Wandesford 's dead,
And you 've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes
next:
I 've found small time of late for my affairs,
But I trust any of you, Pym himself—
No one could hurt them: there 's an infant, too.
These tedious cares! Your Majesty could spare
them.
Nay—pardon me, my King! I had forgotten
Your education, trials, much temptation,
Some weakness: there escaped a peevish word—
'T is gone: I bless you at the last. You know
All 's between you and me: what has the world
To do with it? Farewell!
Charles [*at the door*]. Balfour! Balfour!

Enter BALFOUR

The Parliament!—go to them: I grant all
Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent:
Tell them to keep their money if they will:
I 'll come to them for every coat I wear
And every crust I eat: only I choose
To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall choose!
—You never heard the People howl for blood,
Beside!

Balfour. Your Majesty may hear them now:
The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out:
Please you retire!
Charles. Take all the troops, Balfour!
Balfour. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.
Charles. Come with me, Strafford! You 'll not fear, at least!
Strafford. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!
I charge you, as a dying man, forget
You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour,
The King was sorry: 't is no shame in him:
Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,
And that I walked the lighter to the block
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir!
Earth fades, heaven breaks on me: I shall stand next
Before God's throne: the moment 's close at hand
When man the first, last time, has leave to lay
His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave
To clear up the long error of a life
And choose one happiness for evermore.
With all mortality about me, Charles,
The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death—
What if, despite the opening angel-song,
There penetrate one prayer for you? Be saved
Through me! Bear witness, no one could prevent
My death! Lead on! ere he awake—best, now!
All must be ready: did you say, Balfour,
The crowd began to murmur? They 'll be kept
Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's!
Now! But tread softly—children are at play
In the next room. Precede! I follow—

Enter Lady CARLISLE, *with many* Attendants

Lady Carlisle. Me!
Follow me, Strafford, and be saved! The King?
[*To the* KING.] Well—as you ordered, they are ranged without,
The convoy . . . [*seeing the* KING'S *state.*]
[*To* STRAFFORD.] You know all, then! Why, I thought
It looked best that the King should save you,—Charles
Alone; 't is a shame that you should owe me aught.
Or no, not shame! Strafford, you 'll not feel shame
At being saved by me?
Hollis. All true! Oh Strafford,
She saves you! all her deed! this lady's deed!
And is the boat in readiness? You, friend,
Are Billingsley, no doubt. Speak to her, Strafford!
See how she trembles, waiting for your voice!
The world 's to learn its bravest story yet.
Lady Carlisle. Talk afterward! Long nights in France enough,
To sit beneath the vines and talk of home.
Strafford. You love me, child? Ah, Strafford can be loved
As well as Vane! I could escape, then?
Lady Carlisle. Haste!
Advance the torches, Bryan!
Strafford. I will die.
They call me proud: but England had no right,
When she encountered me—her strength to mine—
To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl,
I fought her to the utterance, I fell,
I am her's now, and I will die. Beside,
The lookers-on! Eliot is all about
This place, with his most uncomplaining brow.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford!
Strafford. I think if you could know how much
I love you, you would be repaid, my friend!
Lady Carlisle. Then, for my sake!
Strafford. Even for your sweet sake,
I stay.
Hollis. For *their* sake!
Strafford. To bequeath a stain?
Leave me! Girl, humour me and let me die!
Lady Carlisle. Bid him escape—wake, King!
Bid him escape!
Strafford. True, I will go! Die, and forsake
the King?
I 'll not draw back from the last service.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford!
Strafford. And, after all, what is disgrace
to me?
Let us come, child! That it should end this way!
Lead then! but I feel strangely: it was not
To end this way.
Lady Carlisle. Lean—lean on me!
Strafford. My King!
Oh, had he trusted me—his friend of friends!
Lady Carlisle. I can support him, Hollis!
Strafford. Not this way!
This gate—I dreamed of it, this very gate.
Lady Carlisle. It opens on the river: our good
boat
Is moored below, our friends are there.
Strafford. The same:
Only with something ominous and dark,
Fatal, inevitable.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford! Strafford!
Strafford. Not by this gate! I feel what will be
there!
I dreamed of it, I tell you: touch it not!

Lady Carlisle. To save the King,—Strafford, to save the King!

[*As* STRAFFORD *opens the door,* PYM *is discovered with* HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.* STRAFFORD *falls back;* PYM *follows slowly and confronts him.*

Pym. Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose sole sake
I still have laboured for, with disregard
To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made
Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up
Her sacrifice—this friend, this Wentworth here—
Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,
I hunted by all means (trusting that she
Would sanctify all means) even to the block
Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel
No bitterer pang than first I felt, the hour
I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I
Would never leave him: I do leave him now.
I render up my charge (be witness, God!)
To England who imposed it. I have done
Her bidding—poorly, wrongly,—it may be,
With ill effects—for I am weak, a man:
Still, I have done my best, my human best,
Not faltering for a moment. It is done.
And this said, if I say . . . yes, I will say
I never loved but one man—David not
More Jonathan! Even thus, I love him now:
And look for my chief portion in that world
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,
(Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon:
My mission over, I shall not live long,)—
Ay, here I know I talk—I dare and must,
Of England, and her great reward, as all
I look for there; but in my inmost heart,

Believe, I think of stealing quite away
To walk once more with Wentworth—my youth's friend
Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,
And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .
This is no meeting, Wentworth! Tears increase
Too hot. A thin mist—is it blood?—enwraps
The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be!
Strafford. I have loved England too; we 'll meet then, Pym.
As well die now! Youth is the only time
To think and to decide on a great course:
Manhood with action follows; but 't is dreary,
To have to alter our whole life in age—
The time past, the strength gone! As well die now.
When we meet, Pym, I 'd be set right—not now!
Best die. Then if there 's any fault, fault too
Dies, smothered up. Poor grey old little Laud
May dream his dream out, of a perfect Church,
In some blind corner. And there 's no one left.
I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym!
And yet, I know not: I shall not be there:
Friends fail—if he have any. And he 's weak,
And loves the Queen, and . . . Oh, my fate is nothing—
Nothing! But not that awful head—not that!
Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . . .
Strafford. Pym, you help England! I, that am to die,
What I must see! 't is here—all here! My God,
Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,
How thou wilt plague him, satiating hell!
What? England that you help, become through you
A green and putrefying charnel, left
Our children . . . some of us have children, Pym—

Some who, without that, still must ever wear
A darkened brow, an over-serious look,
And never properly be young! No word?
What if I curse you? Send a strong curse forth
Clothed from my heart, lapped round with horror till
She 's fit with her white face to walk the world
Scaring kind natures from your cause and you—
Then to sit down with you at the board-head,
The gathering for prayer . . . O speak, but speak!
. . . Creep up, and quietly follow each one home,
You, you, you, be a nestling care for each
To sleep with,—hardly moaning in his dreams,
She gnaws so quietly,—till, lo he starts,
Gets off with half a heart eaten away!
Oh, shall you 'scape with less if she 's my child?
You will not say a word—to me—to Him?

Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . . .

Strafford. No, not for England now, not for Heaven now,—
See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel to you!
There, I will thank you for the death, my friend!
This is the meeting: let me love you well!

Pym. England,—I am thine own! Dost thou exact
That service? I obey thee to the end.

Strafford. O God, I shall die first—I shall die first!

PIPPA PASSES

A DRAMA

I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM,
ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF "ION,"
AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERGEANT TALFOURD.

R. B.

LONDON: 1841.

PERSONS

PIPPA
OTTIMA
SEBALD
Foreign Students
GOTTLIEB
SCHRAMM
JULES
PHENE
Austrian Police
BLUPHOCKS
LUIGI *and his Mother*
Poor Girls
MONSIGNOR *and his Attendants*

PIPPA PASSES

1841

INTRODUCTION

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN

SCENE.—*A large mean airy chamber. A girl,* PIPPA, *from the Silk-mills, springing out of bed*

DAY!
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last:
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above measure)
One of thy choices or one of thy chances,

(Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy pleasure)
—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—
Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood—
All shall be mine! But thou must treat me not
As prosperous ones are treated, those who live
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
And free to let alone what thou refusest;
For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow,
Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow:
Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
Get more joy one way, if another, less:
Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven,—
Solelight that helps me through the year, thy sun's!
Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
And let thy morning rain on that superb
Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb
Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain
Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?
And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom

Save for their dear selves? 'T is their marriage-
day;
And while they leave church and go home their way,
Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be
Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.
Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
For true content? The cheerful town, warm, close
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
To visit Asolo, his brother's home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace?
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.
But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!
And here I let time slip for nought!
Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught
With a single splash from my ewer!
You that would mock the best pursuer,
Was my basin over-deep?
One splash of water ruins you asleep,
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
Wheeling and counterwheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond healing:
Now grow together on the ceiling!
That will task your wits.
Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to see
Morsel after morsel flee
As merrily, as giddily . . .

Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?
New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse
Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!
I am queen of thee, floweret!
And each fleshy blossom
Preserve I not—(safer
Than leaves that embower it,
Or shells that embosom)
—From weevil and chafer?
Laugh through my pane then; solicit the bee;
Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,
Love thy queen, worship me!

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,
Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?
To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
But, this one day, I have leave to go,
And play out my fancy's fullest games;
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the hill-side yonder, through the morning,
Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:
I am no less than Ottima, take warning!

The gardens, and the great stone house above,
And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,
Are mine ; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,
To court me, while old Luca yet reposes :
And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,
I . . . what now ?—give abundant cause for prate
About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
Too bold, too confident she 'll still face down
The spitefullest of talkers in our town.
How we talk in the little town below !
But love, love, love—there 's better love, I know !
This foolish love was only day's first offer ;
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer :
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
Out of Possagno church at noon ?
Their house looks over Orcana valley :
Why should not I be the bride as soon
As Ottima ? For I saw, beside,
Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
Blacker than all except the black eyelash ;
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses !
—So strict was she, the veil
Should cover close her pale
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
Scarce touch, remember, Jules ! For are not such
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature ?
A soft and easy life these ladies lead :
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.
Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
Keep that foot its lady primness,
Let those ankles never swerve

From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
All but naked to the knee!
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss?
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I 'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;
As little fear of losing it as winning:
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
And only parents' love can last our lives.
At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our turret: what prevents
My being Luigi? While that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
—Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;
Let me be Luigi! If I only knew
What was my mother's face—my father, too!
Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,
Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home
Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn
That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn

With love for all men! I, to-night at least,
Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait!—even I already seem to share
In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?
What other meaning do these verses bear?

All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly he trod
Paradise, his presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.

Say not "a small event!" Why "small"?
Costs it more pain that this, ye call
A "great event," should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!

And more of it, and more of it!—oh yes—
I will pass each, and see their happiness,
And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!
A pretty thing to care about
So mightily, this single holiday!
But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
—With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass path grey with dew,
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
Where the swallow never flew
Nor yet cicala dared carouse—
No, dared carouse! [*She enters the street.*

PART I

MORNING

SCENE.—*Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.* LUCA'S *wife*, OTTIMA, *and her paramour, the German* SEBALD

Sebald [*sings*].

Let the watching lids wink!
Day's a-blaze with eyes, think!
Deep into the night, drink!

Ottima. Night? Such may be your Rhineland nights perhaps;
But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink
—We call such light, the morning: let us see!
Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall
Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice
Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,
It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course
The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,
Or must I find you something else to spoil?
Kiss and befriends, my Sebald! Is 't full morning?
Oh, don't speak then!

Sebald. Ay, thus it used to be.
Ever your house was, I remember, shut
Till mid-day; I observed that, as I strolled
On mornings through the vale here; country girls
Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills:

But no, your house was mute, would one no eye.
And wisely: you were plotting one thing there,
Nature, another outside. I looked up—
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.
Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed
And said, "The old man sleeps with the young wife."
This house was his, this chair, this window—his.
Ottima. Ah, the clear morning! I can see St. Mark's;
That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza
Should lie . . . there 's Padua, plain enough, that blue!
Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger!
Sebald. Morning?
It seems to me a night with a sun added.
Where 's dew, where 's freshness? That bruised plant, I bruised
In getting through the lattice yestereve,
Droops as it did. See, here 's my elbow's mark
I' the dust o' the sill.
Ottima. Oh, shut the lattice, pray!
Sebald. Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,
Foul as the morn may be.
There, shut the world out!
How do you feel now, Ottima? There, curse
The world and all outside! Let us throw off
This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let 's out
With all of it.
Ottima. Best never speak of it.
Sebald. Best speak again and yet again of it,
Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"
For instance—let those two words mean "His blood"

And nothing more. Notice, I 'll say them now,
"His blood."
Ottima. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—
Sebald. Repent? Who should repent, or why?
What puts that in your head? Did I once say
That I repented?
Ottima. No, I said the deed . . .
Sebald. "The deed" and "the event"—just now it was
"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant!
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are . . .
Ottima. Here 's the wine;
I brought it when we left the house above,
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black? White then?
Sebald. But am not I his cut-throat? What are you?
Ottima. There trudges on his business from the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet; always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry.
I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
To let me pass—at first, I say, I used:
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,
I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.
This, Sebald?
Sebald. No, the white wine—the white wine!
Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way;
Nor does it rise. Pour on! To your black eyes!
Do you remember last damned New Year's day?

Ottima. You brought those foreign prints. We looked at them
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up
To hunt them out.
Sebald. 'Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face.
Ottima. Do you
Fondle me then! Who means to take your life
For that, my Sebald?
Sebald. Hark you, Ottima!
One thing to guard against. We 'll not make much
One of the other—that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
Than yesterday: as if, sweet, I supposed
Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,
To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you
In spite of Luca and what 's come to him
—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
White sneering old reproachful face and all!
We 'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other, were not tied
By this: conceive you?
Ottima. Love!
Sebald. Not tied so sure.
Because though I was wrought upon, have struck
His insolence back into him—am I
So surely yours?—therefore forever yours?
Ottima. Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)
Should we have—months ago, when first we loved,
For instance that May morning we two stole
Under the green ascent of sycamores—
If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly . . .

Sebald. "A thing"—there again—"a thing!"
Ottima. Then, Venus' body, had we come upon
My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—
Would you have pored upon it? Why persist
In poring now upon it? For 't is here
As much as there in the deserted house:
You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse: I hate . . .
Dare you stay here? I would go back and hold
His two dead hands, and say, "I hate you worse,
"Luca, than . . ."
Sebald. Off, off—take your hands off mine,
'T is the hot evening—off! oh, morning is it?
Ottima. There 's one thing must be done; you know what thing.
Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.
Sebald. What would come, think you, if we let him lie
Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him! He is turned by this
Off from his face beside, as you will see.
Ottima. This dusty pane might serve for looking glass.
Three, four—four grey hairs! Is it so you said
A plait of hair should wave across my neck?
No—this way.
Sebald. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,
That this were undone! Killing! Kill the world
So Luca lives again!—ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I return at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here—

Bid me despatch my business and begone.
I would . . .
Ottima. See!
Sebald. No, I 'll finish. Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?
All we have talked of, is, at bottom, fine
To suffer; there 's a recompense in guilt;
One must be venturous and fortunate:
What is one young for, else? In age we 'll sigh
O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown over;
Still, we have lived: the vice was in its place.
But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—
Do lovers in romances sin that way?
Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music, starving while you plucked
me
These flowers to smell!
Ottima. My poor lost friend!
Sebald. He gave me
Life, nothing less: what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—
Had he no right? What was to wonder at?
He sat by us at table quietly:
Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched?
Could he do less than make pretence to strike?
'T is not the crime's sake—I 'd commit ten crimes
Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!
And you—O how feel you? Feel you for me?
Ottima. Well then, I love you better now than
ever,
And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth,
This mask, this simulated ignorance,
This affectation of simplicity,
Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours

May not now be looked over: look it down!
Great? let it be great; but the joys it brought,
Pay they or no its price? Come: they or it!
Speak not! The past, would you give up the past
Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
Give up that noon I owned my love for you?
The garden's silence: even the single bee
Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped,
And where he hid you only could surmise
By some campanula chalice set a-swing.
Who stammered—"Yes, I love you?"
Sebald. And I drew
Back; put far back your face with both my hands
Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!
Ottima. And when I ventured to receive you here,
Made you steal hither in the mornings—
Sebald. When
I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
To a yellow haze?
Ottima. Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree
Nipped by the first frost.
Sebald. You would always laugh
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass
Over my ankles.
Ottima. Then our crowning night!
Sebald. The July night?
Ottima. The day of it too, Sebald!
When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,
Its black-blue canopy suffered descend
Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,
And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.

Sebald. How it came!
Ottima. Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—
Sebald. Yes!
Ottima. —While I stretched myself upon you, hands
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook
All my locks loose, and covered you with them—
You, Sebald, the same you!
Sebald. Slower, Ottima!
Ottima. And as we lay—
Sebald. Less vehemently! Love me!
Forgive me! Take not words, mere words, to heart!
Your breath is worse than wine! Breathe slow, speak slow!
Do not lean on me!
Ottima. Sebald, as we lay,
Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, "Let death come now! 'T is right to die!
"Right to be punished! Nought completes such bliss
"But woe!" Who said that?
Sebald. How did we ever rise?
Was 't that we slept? Why did it end?
Ottima. I felt you
Taper into a point the ruffled ends

Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.
My hair is fallen now: knot it again!
Sebald. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now and now!
This way? Will you forgive me—be once more
My great queen?
Ottima. Bind it thrice about my brow;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that!
Sebald. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent . . .
[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

The year 's at the spring
And day 's at the morn;
Morning 's at seven;
The hill-side 's dew-pearled;
The lark 's on the wing;
The snail 's on the thorn:
God 's in his heaven—
All 's right with the world!

[PIPPA *passes.*

Sebald. God 's in his heaven! Do you hear that? Who spoke?
You, you spoke!
Ottima. Oh—that little ragged girl!
She must have rested on the step: we give them
But this one holiday the whole year round.
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside?
There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh!
She does not hear: call you out louder!
Sebald. Leave me!
Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders!
Ottima. Sebald?
Sebald. Wipe off that paint! I hate you.
Ottima. Miserable!

Sebald. My God, and she is emptied of it now!
Outright now!—how miraculously gone
All of the grace—had she not strange grace once?
Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes
No purpose holds the features up together,
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
Stay in their places: and the very hair,
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
Drops, a dead web!
Ottima. Speak to me—not of me!
Sebald. —That round great full-orbed face, where not an angle
Broke the delicious indolence—all broken!
Ottima. To me—not of me! Ungrateful, perjured cheat!
A coward too: but ingrate 's worse than all.
Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie!
Leave me! Betray me! I can see your drift!
A lie that walks and eats and drinks!
Sebald. My God!
Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades—
I should have known there was no blood beneath!
Ottima. You hate me then? You hate me then?
Sebald. To think
She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning, show herself
Superior—guilt from its excess superior
To innocence! That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick! I see what I have done,
Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take credit thence—
I, having done my deed, pay too its price!
I hate, hate—curse you! God 's in his heaven!

Ottima. —Me!
Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill me!
Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—then
Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak!
I always meant to kill myself—wait, you!
Lean on my breast—not as a breast; don't love me
The more because you lean on me, my own
Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently!
Sebald. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned: all I feel
Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,
A hurry-down within me, as of waters
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:
There they go—whirls from a black fiery sea!
Ottima. Not me—to him, O God, be merciful!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA *is passing from the hill-side to Orcana. Foreign* Students *of painting and sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the house of* JULES, *a young French statuary, at Possagno*

1*st Student.* Attention! My own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who 's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest 's found out.

2*nd Student.* All here! Only our poet 's away —never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in

love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all: whereto is this prophetical epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me,—"*Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies.*" His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phœbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .*

3rd Student. Subside, my fine fellow! If the marrage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2nd Student. Good!—only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris* . . . and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

1st Student. To the point, now. Where 's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman —the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalized, heartless bunglers!—so he was heard

to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalized, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gottlieb. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters now, you call his—I can't laugh at them.

4th Student. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gottlieb. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Student. That 's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there 's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gottlieb. See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, "in stone, and the world's women beside him, "in flesh; these being as much below, as those "above, his soul's aspiration: but now he is to "have the reality." There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Student. Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is

superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there 's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1st Student. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

5th Student. Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

1st Student. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we

be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla.* Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the Academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice,* transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and despatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way —secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

6th Student. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!

5th Student. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

2nd Student. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off.

6th Student. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gottlieb. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

1st Student. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

6th Student. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gottlieb. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

1st Student. They go in: now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate: just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

PART II

NOON

SCENE.—*Over Orcana. The house of* JULES, *who crosses its threshold with* PHENE : *she is silent, on which* JULES *begins—*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you
Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,
If you 'll not die: so, never die! Sit here—
My work-room's single seat. I over-lean
This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn
Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last
Your chin—no, last your throat turns: 't is their scent
Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever
This one way till I change, grow you—I could
Change into you, beloved!
You by me,
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit: all 's true. Thank God!
I have spoken: speak you!
O my life to come!
My Tydeus must be carved that 's there in clay;
Yet how be carved, with you about the room?
Where must I place you? When I think that once
This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven
Without you! Shall I ever work again,
Get fairly into my old ways again,

Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?
Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth—
The live truth, passing and repassing me,
Sitting beside me?
Now speak!
Only first,
See, all your letters! Was 't not well contrived?
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps
Your letters next her skin: which drops out foremost?
Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam
Into my world!
Again those eyes complete
Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
Of all my room holds; to return and rest
On me, with pity, yet some wonder too:
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
And this were the one moment of surprise
And sorrow while she took her station, pausing
O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!
What gaze you at? Those? Books, I told you of;
Let your first word to me rejoice them, too:
This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek
First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl!
This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,
To mark great places with due gratitude;
"*He said, and on Antinous directed*
"*A bitter shaft*" . . . a flower blots out the rest!
Again upon your search? My statues, then!
—Ah, do not mind that—better that will look
When cast in bronze—an Almaign Kaiser, that,

Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based
on hip.
This, rather, turn to! What, unrecognized?
I thought you would have seen that here you sit
As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.
Recall you this then? "Carve in bold relief"—
So you commanded—"carve, against I come,
"A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
"Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
"Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch.
"'Praise those who slew Hipparchus!' cry the
guests,
"'While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves
"'As erst above our champion: stand up, all!'"
See, I have laboured to express your thought.
Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,
(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
Only consenting at the branch's end
They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face,
The Praiser's, in the centre: who with eyes
Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
His brain where visionary forms throng up,
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine
From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns
cast off,
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.
But you must say a "well" to that—say "well!"
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet?
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly
Even to the silence! Why, before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff

For better nature's birth by means of art:
With me, each substance tended to one form
Of beauty—to the human archetype.
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy limbs,
Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang.
But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities!
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world. But marble!—'neath my tools
More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from depths
In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
And whence all baser substance may be worked;
Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it
Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,
When o'er the sudden speck my chisel trips?
—Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,
Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep?
Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised
By the swift implement sent home at once,
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
About its track?
Phene? what—why is this?
That whitening cheek, those still dilating eyes!
Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die!

PHENE *begins, on his having long remained silent*

Now the end 's coming; to be sure, it must
Have ended sometime! Tush, why need I speak
Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind
One half of it, beside; and do not care
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
To say the words Natalia made me learn,
To please your friends,—it is to keep myself
Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
Proceed: but can it? Even you, perhaps,
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
The music's life, and me along with that—
No, or you would! We 'll stay, then, as we are:
Above the world.
You creature with the eyes!
If I could look for ever up to them,
As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
Whence all that 's low comes, and there touch and stay
—Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,
Not me the shame and suffering; but they sink,
Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
Above the world!
But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering — altered! Stay — "I love you, love" . . .
I could prevent it if I understood:
More of your words to me: was 't in the tone
Or the words, your power?
Or stay—I will repeat

Their speech, if that contents you! Only change
No more, and I shall find it presently
Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.
Natalia threatened me that harm should follow
Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends
And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,
Observing (what was very strange to see)
On every face, so different in all else,
The same smile girls like me are used to bear,
But never men, men cannot stoop so low;
Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,
That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
Which seems to take possession of the world
And make of God a tame confederate,
Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know!
But still Natalia said they were your friends,
And they assented though they smiled the more,
And all came round me,—that thin Englishman
With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest;
He held a paper—"What we want," said he,
Ending some explanation to his friends—
"Is something slow, involved and mystical,
"To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste
"And lure him on until, at innermost
"Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find—this!
"—As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:
"For insects on the rind are seen at once,
"And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
"Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."
And so he read what I have got by heart:
I 'll speak it,—"Do not die, love! I am yours."
No—is not that, or like that, part of words

Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose
What cost such pains to learn! Is this more right?

I am a painter who cannot paint;
In my life, a devil rather than saint;
In my brain, as poor a creature too:
No end to all I cannot do!
Yet do one thing at least I can—
Love a man or hate a man
Supremely: thus my lore began.
Through the Valley of Love I went,
In the lovingest spot to abide,
And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
I found Hate dwelling beside.
(Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,
Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)
And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
In the hatefullest nook to dwell;
But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love
Where the shadow threefold fell.
(The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,
Not a painter's lip should tell!)

"And here," said he, "Jules probably will ask,
"'You have black eyes, Love,—you are, sure enough,
"'My peerless bride,—then do you tell indeed
"'What needs some explanation! What means this?'"
—And I am to go on, without a word—

So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,
From simple that I was of late.
Once, when I loved, I would enlace
Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face
Of her I loved, in one embrace—
As if by mere love I could love immensely!
Once, when I hated, I would plunge
My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
My foe's whole life out like a sponge—
As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!
But now I am wiser, know better the fashion
How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion:

And if I see cause to love more, hate more
Than ever man loved, ever hated before—
And seek in the Valley of Love,
The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove,
Where my soul may surely reach
The essence, nought less, of each,
The Hate of all Hates, the Love
Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove,—
I find them the very warders
Each of the other's borders.
When I love most, Love is disguised
In Hate; and when Hate is surprised
In Love, then I hate most: ask
How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,
Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—
And how, having hated thee,
I sought long and painfully
To reach thy heart, nor prick
The skin but pierce to the quick—
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight
By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate!

JULES *interposes*

Lutwyche! Who else? But all of them, no doubt,
Hated me: they at Venice—presently
Their turn, however! You I shall not meet:
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me.
Keep
What 's here, the gold—we cannot meet again,
Consider! and the money was but meant
For two years' travel, which is over now,
All chance or hope or care or need of it.
This—and what comes from selling these, my casts
And books and medals, except . . . let them go
Together, so the produce keeps you safe
Out of Natalia's clutches! If by chance
(For all 's chance here) I should survive the gang

At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.
[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing—*

Give her but a least excuse to love me!
When—where—
How—can this arm establish her above me,
If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me?
("Hist!"—said Kate the Queen;
But "Oh!"—cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
"'T is only a page that carols unseen,
"Crumbling your hounds their messes!")

Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honour,
My heart!
Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donor?
Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.
But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!
("Nay, list!"—bade Kate the Queen;
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
"'T is only a page that carols unseen,
"Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

[PIPPA *passes.*

JULES *resumes*

What name was that the little girl sang forth?
Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced
The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
And peasants sing how once a certain page
Pined for the grace of her so far above
His power of doing good to, "Kate the Queen—
"She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,
"Need him to help her!"
Yes, a bitter thing
To see our lady above all need of us;
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever loves

Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,
Why should we always choose the page's part?
Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
I find myself queen here, it seems!
How strange!
Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Like my own Psyche,—fresh upon her lips
Alit, the visionary butterfly,
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
Fastened their image on its passiveness:
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
Be Art—and further, to evoke a soul
From form be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do?—save
A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
Without me, from their hooting. Oh, to hear
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
They broke in with their laughter! I heard them
Henceforth, not God.
To Ancona—Greece—some isle!
I wanted silence only; there is clay
Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
In Art: the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains to know.
Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream!
Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,
What the whole world except our love—my own,
Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,

Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—
I do but break these paltry models up
To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—
And save him from my statue meeting him?
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Like a god going through his world, there stands
One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow:
And you are ever by me while I gaze
—Are in my arms as now—as now—as now!
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA *is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with* BLUPHOCKS, *an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret*

Bluphocks.[1] So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned:— now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business; we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors: we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there 's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might re-

[1] "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

mark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity: 't was the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*) and one morning presented myself, spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past, you 'll say—"*How Moses hocus-pocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust*,"—or, "*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish*," —or, "*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam.*" In no wise! "*Shackabrack —Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen Goods!*" So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge —mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolus* . . . (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant—I possess a burning pocketful of *zwanzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian Ferry!*

1st Policeman. There is a girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. [*To the rest.*] I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2nd Policeman. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

Bluphocks. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believest thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

2nd Policeman. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out; the afternoon 's over or nearly so.

3rd Policeman. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? What 's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool 's busy watching.)

2nd Policeman. Flourish all round—"Put all possible obstacles in his way"; oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you"; scratch at bottom—"Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above"; inkspirt on right-hand side (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once." Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna—well and good, the passport deposed with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corre-

sponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

PART III

EVENING

SCENE.—*Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo.*
LUIGI *and his* Mother *entering*

Mother. If there blew wind, you 'd hear a long sigh, easing
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.
Luigi. Here in the archway?
Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.
Luigi. Here surely, then.
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!
Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost of a voice
Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?
Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead?
They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair
That lean out of their topmost fortress—look
And listen, mountain men, to what we say,
Hand under chin of each grave earthy face.
Up and show faces all of you!—"All of you!"
That 's the king dwarf with the scarlet comb; old Franz,
Come down and meet your fate? Hark—"Meet your fate!"
Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not
Go to his City! Putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned:

Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.
Luigi. Hush! Say A. writes, and B.
Mother. These A.s and B.s write for effect, I say.
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
Is silent; you hear each petty injury,
None of his virtues; he is old beside,
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?
Luigi. They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed,
I could not teach that: mine 's the lesser task.
Mother, they visit night by night . . .
Mother. —You, Luigi?
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?
Luigi. Why not? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,
You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself! At times—nay, even as now
We sit—I think my mind is touched, suspect
All is not sound: but is not knowing that,
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
I know I am thus—so, all is right again.
I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,
And see men merry as if no Italy
Were suffering; then I ponder—"I am rich,
"Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,
"More than it troubles these?" But it does trouble.
No, trouble 's a bad word: for as I walk
There 's springing and melody and giddiness,
And old quaint turns and passages of my youth,
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,
Return to me—whatever may amuse me:
And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven
Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,

The very cicala laughs "There goes he, and there!
"Feast him, the time is short; he is on his way
"For the world's sake: feast him this once, our friend!"
And in return for all this, I can trip
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
This evening, mother!
Mother. But mistrust yourself—
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him!
Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!
Mother. Mistrust your judgment then, of the mere means
To this wild enterprise. Say, you are right,—
How should one in your state e'er bring to pass
What would require a cool head, a cold heart,
And a calm hand? You never will escape.
Luigi. Escape? To even wish that, would spoil all.
The dying is best part of it. Too much
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
To leave myself excuse for longer life:
Was not life pressed down, running o'er with joy,
That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparelier feasted, make a longer stay?
I was put at the board-head, helped to all
At first; I rise up happy and content.
God must be glad one loves his world so much.
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and great stars
Which had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—

May 's warm slow yellow moonlit summer nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!
Mother. (He will not go!)
Luigi. You smile at me? 'T is true,—
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreathe
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.
Mother. See now: you reach the city, you must cross
His threshold—how?
Luigi. Oh, that 's if we conspired!
Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—
But guess not how the qualities most fit
For such an office, qualities I have,
Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve: and yet
Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder
In search of a distorted ash?—I find
The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect bow.
Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man
Arriving at the palace on my errand!
No, no! I have a handsome dress packed up—
White satin here, to set off my black hair;
In I shall march—for you may watch your life out
Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you;
More than one man spoils everything. March straight—
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.
Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on
Thro' guards and guards——I have rehearsed it all
Inside the turret here a hundred times.

Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe!
But where they cluster thickliest is the door
Of doors; they 'll let you pass—they 'll never blab
Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,
Whence he is bound and what 's his business now.
Walk in—straight up to him; you have no knife:
Be prompt, how should he scream? Then, out with you!
Italy, Italy, my Italy!
You 're free, you 're free! Oh mother, I could dream
They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his grave!
Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism
The easiest virtue for a selfish man
To acquire: he loves himself—and next, the world—
If he must love beyond,—but nought between:
As a short-sighted man sees nought midway
His body and the sun above. But you
Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient
To my least wish, and running o'er with love:
I could not call you cruel or unkind.
Once more, your ground for killing him!—then go!
Luigi. Now do you try me, or make sport of me?
How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .
(If that is all, I 'll satisfy you soon)
—Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby . . .
Mother. Well?
Luigi. (Sure, he 's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo: spring 's his confidant,
And he lets out her April purposes!)
Or . . . better go at once to modern time,
He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I understand
But can't restate the matter; that 's my boast:

Others could reason it out to you, and prove
Things they have made me feel.
Mother. Why go to-night?
Morn 's for adventure. Jupiter is now
A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!
Luigi. "I am the bright and morning-star," saith God—
And, "to such an one I give the morning-star."
The gift of the morning-star! Have I God's gift
Of the morning-star?
Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.
Luigi. True, mother. Well for those who live through June!
Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring pomps
That triumph at the heels of June the god
Leading his revel through our leafy world.
Yes, Chiara will be here.
Mother. In June: remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her coming.
Luigi. Was that low noise the echo?
Mother. The night-wind.
She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned
As if life were one long and sweet surprise:
In June she comes.
Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso. There, again!

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing—*

A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now:
And the king's locks curled,
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn
Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born:

For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,
(*The gods so loved him while he dreamed*)
That, having lived thus long, there seemed
No need the king should ever die.

Luigi. No need that sort of king should ever die!

Among the rocks his city was:
Before his palace, in the sun,
He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground;
And sometimes clung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen thickset brows:
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
Who through some chink had pushed and pressed
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple,—caught
He was by the very god,
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!
These, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.

Luigi. That king should still judge sitting in the sun!

His councillors, on left and right,
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes
Where the very blue had turned to white.
'T is said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came,
With forky tongue and eyes on flame,
Where the old king sat to judge alway;

But when he saw the sweepy hair
Girt with a crown of berries rare
Which the god will hardly give to wear
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
At his wondrous forest rites,—
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world begun!
[PIPPA *passes.*

Luigi. And such grace have they, now that the world ends!
The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?
'Tis God's voice calls: how could I stay? Farewell!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA *is passing from the Turret to the Bishop's Brother's House, close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor* Girls *sitting on the steps*

1*st Girl.* There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout seafarer!
Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.
Let us all wish; you wish first!
2*nd Girl.* I? This sunset
To finish.
3*rd Girl.* That old—somebody I know,
Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last week—
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling
The while some folly about how well I fare,
Let sit and eat my supper quietly:

Since had he not himself been late this morning
Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . . .
"Eh, baggage, had I not!"—
2nd Girl. How she can lie!
3rd Girl. Look there—by the nails!
2nd Girl. What makes your fingers red?
3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad words with
On the bright table: how he laughed!
1st Girl. My turn.
Spring 's come and summer 's coming. I would wear
A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,
With plaits here, close about the throat, all day;
And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed;
And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . . ah, I should say,
This is away in the fields—miles!
3rd Girl. Say at once
You 'd be at home: she 'd always be at home!
Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
White blossoms on her as she ran. Why, fool,
They 've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall you were,
Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
Made a dung-hill of your garden!
1st Girl. They, destroy
My garden since I left them? well—perhaps!
I would have done so: so I hope they have!
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was born:
Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there

And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,
And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through.
3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches! Where was I?—before
She broke in with her wishes and long gowns
And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh, here!
This is my way: I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of him—
(If you say, "you love him"—straight "he 'll not be gulled!")
"He that seduced me when I was a girl
"Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,
"Brown, red, white,"—as the case may be: that pleases!
See how that beetle burnishes in the path!
There sparkles he along the dust: and, there—
Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at least!
1st Girl. When I was young, they said if you killed one
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.
2nd Girl. When you were young? Nor are you young, that 's true.
How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away!
Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you still?
No matter, so you keep your curious hair.
I wish they 'd find a way to dye our hair
Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,
Than black: the men say they are sick of black,
Black eyes, black hair!
4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough.
Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys
And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,

Engaged (but there 's no trusting him) to slice me
Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.
2nd Girl. Why, there! Is not that Pippa
We are to talk to, under the window,—quick,—
Where the lights are?
1st Girl. That she? No, or she would sing,
For the Intendant said . . .
3rd Girl. Oh, you sing first!
Then, if she listens and comes close . . . I 'll tell
you,—
Sing that song the young English noble made,
Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you—what fun!
2nd Girl [*sings*].

You 'll love me yet!—and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing:
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartful now: some seed
At least is sure to strike,
And yield—what you 'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, may be, like.

You 'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet:
Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
What 's death? You 'll love me yet!

3rd Girl [*to* PIPPA *who approaches*]. Oh, you may come closer—we shall not eat you! Why, you seem the very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with. I 'll tell you all about it.

PART IV

NIGHT

SCENE.—*Inside the Palace by the Duomo.* MONSIGNOR, *dismissing his* Attendants

Monsignor. Thanks, friends, many thanks! I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur* . . . ugh, ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather: but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 't was full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the* Intendant.] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment.*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo.

Intendant. Uguccio—

Monsignor. . . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Intendant. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Monsignor. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the Third of December, I find him . . .

Intendant. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Monsignor. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here 's his letter,—"He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,"—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Intendant. Is Correggio a painter?

Monsignor. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will—fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel), transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Intendant. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually, —always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

Monsignor. Ugo!

Intendant. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*, —and your nod at the end meant,—what?

Monsignor. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Intendant. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Monsignor. I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name), was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Intendant. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Monsignor. Ah, he employed you in that busi-

ness, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were, —what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth: but from myboyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villanous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Intendant. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Monsignor. —Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

Intendant. "Forgive us our trespasses"?

Monsignor. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning? —I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousest efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Intendant. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Monsignor. 1, 2—N° 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N° 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late younger brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the

succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

Intendant. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

Monsignor. Liar!

Intendant. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop —you!

Monsignor. I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Intendant. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off

every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There 's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that 's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'T is but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'T is as well settled once and for ever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
There was nought above me, nought below,
My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one,
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me.

[PIPPA *passes.*

Monsignor [*springing up*]. My people—one and all—all—within there! Gag this villain—tie him

hand and foot! He dares . . . I know not half
he dares—but remove him—quick! *Miserere mei,*
Domine! Quick, I say!

SCENE.—PIPPA'S *chamber again. She enters it*

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in his tomb,
Wile winter away;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm,
I pray,
How fare they?
Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!
"Feast upon lampreys, quaff Breganze"—
The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they?
No bidding me then to . . . what did Zanze say?
"Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet
shoes
"More like" . . . (what said she?)—"and less
like canoes!"
How pert that girl was!—would I be those pert
Impudent staring women! It had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings
Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year brings.

I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next year!
Bluph . . . something! I had caught the uncouth name
But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours: it were indeed a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah but—ah but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:
While—not the worst of people's doings scare
The devil; so there 's that proud look to spare!
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for
I have just been the holy Monsignor:
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started
Out of the turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I?—tired of fooling.
Day for folly, night for schooling!
New year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content.
Even my lily 's asleep, I vow:
Wake up—here 's a friend I 've plucked you:
Call this flower a heart's-ease now!
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this, with petals triply swollen,

Three times spotted, thrice the pollen ;
While the leaves and parts that witness
Old proportions and their fitness,
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now ;
Call this pampered thing improved now !
Suppose there 's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—
" Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
Says he, " Zanze from the Brenta,
" I have made her gorge polenta
" Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
" As her . . . name there 's no pronouncing !
" See this heightened colour too,
" For she swilled Breganze wine
" Till her nose turned deep carmine ;
" 'T was but white when wild she grew.
" And only by this Zanze's eyes
" Of which we could not change the size,
" The magnitude of all achieved
" Otherwise, may be perceived."

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day !
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud ?
Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed !
Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
Oh lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights !
But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,
Toll the world to thy chantry ;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry :
Then, owls and bats,
Cowls and twats,

Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!
[*After she has begun to undress herself.*
Now, one thing I should like to really know:
How near I ever might approach all these
I only fancied being, this long day:
—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you
please,
Do good or evil to them some slight way.
For instance, if I wind
Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind
[*Sitting on the bedside.*
And border Ottima's cloak's hem.
Ah me, and my important part with them,
This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!
True in some sense or other, I suppose.
[*As she lies down.*
God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.
No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

All service ranks the same with God—
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.
[*She sleeps.*

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

A TRAGEDY

NOTE

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistic consequence of what Voltaire termed "a terrible event without consequences"; and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularizing: since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (a tolerable account of which is to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy) —I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the detail of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will of Charles—the noble and right woman's manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily.

R. B.

LONDON: 1842.

PERSONS

VICTOR AMADEUS, *first King of Sardinia*
CHARLES EMMANUEL, *his son, Prince of Piedmont*
POLYXENA, *wife of Charles*
D'ORMEA, *minister*

SCENE.—*The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the left, and another to the right of the stage*

TIME, 1730–1731

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

1842

FIRST YEAR, 1730.—KING VICTOR

PART I

CHARLES, POLYXENA

Charles. You think so? Well, I do not.
Polyxena. My beloved,
All must clear up; we shall be happy yet:
This cannot last for ever—oh, may change
To-day or any day!
Charles. —May change? Ah yes—
May change!
Polyxena. Endure it, then.
Charles. No doubt, a life
Like this drags on, now better and now worse.
My father may . . . may take to loving me;
And he may take D'Ormea closer yet
To counsel him;—may even cast off her
—That bad Sebastian; but he also may
. . . Or no, Polyxena, my only friend,
He may not force you from me?
Polyxena. Now, force me
From you!—me, close by you as if there gloomed
No Sebastians, no D'Ormeas on our path—

At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,
Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . . force me!
Charles. Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure
We clasp hands now, of being happy once.
Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned
By the world's business that engrossed so much
My father and my brother: if I peered
From out my privacy,—amid the crash
And blaze of nations, domineered those two.
'T was war, peace—France our foe, now—England, friend—
In love with Spain—at feud with Austria! Well—
I wondered, laughed a moment's laugh for pride
In the chivalrous couple, then let drop
My curtain—"I am out of it," I said—
When . . .
Polyxena. You have told me, Charles.
Charles. Polyxena—
When suddenly,—a warm March day, just that!
Just so much sunshine as the cottage child
Basks in delighted, while the cottager
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,
To catch the more of it—and it must fall
Heavily on my brother! Had you seen
Philip—the lion-featured! not like me!
Polyxena. I know—
Charles. And Philip's mouth yet fast to mine,
His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still round
My neck,—they bade me rise, "for I was heir
To the Duke," they said, "the right hand of the Duke":
Till then he was my father, not the Duke.
So . . . let me finish . . . the whole intricate
World's-business their dead boy was born to, I
Must conquer,—ay, the brilliant thing he was,
I, of a sudden must be: my faults, my follies,

—All bitter truths were told me, all at once,
To end the sooner. What I simply styled
Their overlooking me, had been contempt:
How should the Duke employ himself, forsooth,
With such an one, while lordly Philip rode
By him their Turin through? But he was punished,
And must put up with—me! 'T was sad enough
To learn my future portion and submit.
And then the wear and worry, blame on blame!
For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells about,
How could I but grow dizzy in their pent
Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's look
As they discussed my insignificance,
She and my father, and I sitting by,—
I bore; I knew how brave a son they missed:
Philip had gaily run state-papers through,
While Charles was spelling at them painfully!
But Victor was my father spite of that.
"Duke Victor's entire life has been," I said,
"Innumerable efforts to one end;
"And on the point now of that end's success,
"Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,
"Where 's time to be reminded 't is his child
"He spurns?" And so I suffered—scarcely suffered,
Since I had you at length!
Polyxena. —To serve in place
Of monarch, minister, and mistress, Charles.
Charles. But, once that crown obtained, then was 't not like
Our lot would alter? "When he rests, takes breath,
"Glances around, sees who there 's left to love—
"Now that my mother 's dead, sees I am left—
"Is it not like he 'll love me at the last?"

Well, Savoy turns Sardinia; the Duke 's King:
Could I—precisely then—could you expect
His harshness to redouble? These few months
Have been . . . have been . . . Polyxena, do you
And God conduct me, or I lose myself!
What would he have? What is 't they want with me?
Him with this mistress and this minister,
—You see me and you hear him; judge us both!
Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!
Polyxena. Endure, endure, beloved! Say you not
He is your father? All 's so incident
To novel sway! Beside, our life must change:
Or you 'll acquire his kingcraft, or he 'll find
Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
I bear this—not that there 's so much to bear.
Charles. You bear? Do not I know that you, tho' bound
To silence for my sake, are perishing
Piecemeal beside me? And how otherwise
When every creephole from the hideous Court
Is stopped: the Minister to dog me, here—
The Mistress posted to entrap you, there!
And thus shall we grow old in such a life;
Not careless, never estranged,—but old: to alter
Our life, there is so much to alter!
Polyxena. Come—
Is it agreed that we forego complaint
Even at Turin, yet complain we here
At Rivoli? 'T were wiser you announced
Our presence to the King. What 's now afoot
I wonder? Not that any more 's to dread
Than every day's embarrassment: but guess
For me, why train so fast succeeded train
On the high-road, each gayer still than each!

I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,
The sable cloak and silver cross; such pomp
Bodes . . . what now, Charles? Can you conceive?
Charles. Not I.
Polyxena. A matter of some moment.
Charles. There 's our life!
Which of the group of loiterers that stare
From the lime-avenue, divines that I—
About to figure presently, he thinks,
In face of all assembled—am the one
Who knows precisely least about it?
Polyxena. Tush!
D'Ormea's contrivance!
Charles. Ay, how otherwise
Should the young Prince serve for the old King's foil?
—So that the simplest courtier may remark
'T were idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger the Court's laughing-stock.
Something, 't is like, about that weary business
[*Pointing to papers he has laid down, and which* POLYXENA *examines.*
—Not that I comprehend three words, of course,
After all last night's study.
Polyxena. The faint heart!
Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just now
Its substance . . . (that 's the folded speech I mean,
Concerning the Reduction of the Fiefs)
—What would you have?—I fancied while you spoke,
Some tones were just your father's.
Charles. Flattery!
Polyxena. I fancied so:—and here lurks, sure enough,

My note upon the Spanish Claims! You 've mastered
The fief-speech thoroughly: this other, mind,
Is an opinion you deliver,—stay,
Best read it slowly over once to me;
Read, there 's bare time; you read it firmly—loud
—Rather loud, looking in his face,—don't sink
Your eye once—ay, thus! "If Spain claims . . ." begin
—Just as you look at me!
Charles. At you! Oh truly,
You have I seen, say, marshalling your troops,
Dismissing councils, or, through doors ajar,
Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow chagrins
—Then radiant, for a crown had all at once
Seemed possible again! I can behold
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast,
In this sweet brow, nought could divert me from
Save objects like Sebastian's shameless lip,
Or worse, the clipped grey hair and dead white face
And dwindling eye as if it ached with guile,
D'Ormea wears . . .
[*As he kisses her, enter from the* KING'S *apartment* D'ORMEA.
I said he would divert
My kisses from your brow!
D'Ormea [*aside*]. Here! So, King Victor
Spoke truth for once: and who 's ordained, but I
To make that memorable? Both in call,
As he declared. Were 't better gnash the teeth,
Or laugh outright now?
Charles [*to* POLYXENA]. What 's his visit for?
D'Ormea [*aside*]. I question if they even speak to me.

Polyxena [*to* CHARLES]. Face the man! He 'll
suppose you fear him, else.
[*Aloud.*] The Marquis bears the King's command,
no doubt?
D'Ormea [*aside*]. Precisely!—If I threatened
him, perhaps?
Well, this at least is punishment enough!
Men used to promise punishment would come.
Charles. Deliver the King's message, Marquis!
D'Ormea [*aside*]. Ah—
So anxious for his fate? [*Aloud.*] A word, my
Prince,
Before you see your father—just one word
Of counsel!
Charles. Oh, your counsel certainly!
Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us!
Well, sir? Be brief, however!
D'Ormea. What? You know
As much as I?—preceded me, most like,
In knowledge! So! ('T is in his eye, beside—
His voice: he knows it, and his heart 's on flame
Already.) You surmise why you, myself,
Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more,
Are summoned thus?
Charles. Is the Prince used to know,
At any time, the pleasure of the King,
Before his minister?—Polyxena,
Stay here till I conclude my task: I feel
Your presence (smile not) through the walls, and
take
Fresh heart. The King 's within that chamber?
D'Ormea [*passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims, as he glances at it*]. "Spain!"
Polyxena [*aside to* CHARLES]. Tarry awhile: what
ails the minister?
D'Ormea. Madam, I do not often trouble you.

The Prince loathes, and you scorn me—let that pass!
But since it touches him and you, not me,
Bid the Prince listen!
Polyxena [*to* CHARLES]. Surely you will listen!
—Deceit?—those fingers crumpling up his vest?
Charles. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!
D'Ormea [*who has approached them, overlooks the other paper* CHARLES *continues to hold*]. My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!
Sir, I must give you light upon those measures
—For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,
Mine too!
Charles. Release me! Do you gloze on me
Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world
You make for me at Turin) your contempt?
—Your measures?—When was not a hateful task
D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe!
What post can I bestow, what grant concede?
Or do you take me for the King?
D'Ormea. Not I!
Not yet for King,—not for, as yet, thank God,
One who in . . . shall I say a year, a month?
Ay!—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave
In his Sardinia.—Europe's spectacle
And the world's bye-word! What? The Prince aggrieved
That I excluded him our counsels? Here
[*Touching the paper in* CHARLES's *hand.*
Accept a method of extorting gold
From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its worth
In silver first from tillers of the soil,
Whose hinds again have to contribute brass
To make up the amount: there 's counsel, sir,
My counsel, one year old; and the fruit, this—
Savoy 's become a mass of misery

And wrath, which one man has to meet—the King:
You 're not the King! Another counsel, sir!
Spain entertains a project (here it lies)
Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that same King
Thus much to baffle Spain; he promises;
Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be forestalled,
Her offer follows; and he promises . . .
Charles. —Promises, sir, when he has just agreed
To Austria's offer?
D'Ormea. That 's a counsel, Prince!
But past our foresight, Spain and Austria (choosing
To make their quarrel up between themselves
Without the intervention of a friend)
Produce both treaties, and both promises . . .
Charles. How?
D'Ormea. Prince, a counsel! And the fruit of that?
Both parties covenant afresh, to fall
Together on their friend, blot out his name,
Abolish him from Europe. So, take note,
Here 's Austria and here 's Spain to fight against:
And what sustains the King but Savoy here,
A miserable people mad with wrongs?
You 're not the King!
Charles. Polyxena, you said
All would clear up: all does clear up to me.
D'Ormea. Clear up! 'T is no such thing to envy, then?
You see the King's state in its length and breadth?
You blame me now for keeping you aloof
From counsels and the fruit of counsels? Wait
Till I explain this morning's business!
Charles [*aside*]. No—
Stoop to my father, yes,—D'Ormea, no:
—The King's son, not to the King's counsellor!

I will do something, but at least retain
The credit of my deed. [*Aloud.*] Then it is this
You now expressly come to tell me?
D'Ormea. This
To tell! You apprehend me?
Charles. Perfectly.
Further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,
For the first time these many weeks and months,
Disposed to do my bidding?
D'Ormea. From the heart!
Charles. Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure
Next . . . or, I 'll tell you at a fitter time.
Acquaint the King!
D'Ormea [*aside*]. If I 'scape Victor yet!
First, to prevent this stroke at me: if not,—
Then, to avenge it! [*To* CHARLES.] Gracious sir, I go. [*Goes.*
Charles. God, I forbore! Which more offends, that man
Or that man's master? Is it come to this?
Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)
I needed e'en his intervention? No!
No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
Scarcely! Their step decides me.
Polyxena. How decides?
Charles. You would be freed D'Ormea's eye and hers?
—Could fly the court with me and live content?
So, this it is for which the knights assemble!
The whispers and the closeting of late,
The savageness and insolence of old,
—For this!
Polyxena. What mean you?
Charles. How? You fail to catch

Their clever plot? I missed it, but could you?
These last two months of care to inculcate
How dull I am,—D'Ormea's present visit
To prove that, being dull, I might be worse
Were I a King—as wretched as now dull—
You recognize in it no winding up
Of a long plot?
Polyxena. Why should there be a plot?
Charles. The crown 's secure now; I should shame the crown—
An old complaint; the point is, how to gain
My place for one, more fit in Victor's eyes,
His mistress the Sebastian's child.
Polyxena. In truth?
Charles. They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince:
But they may descant on my dulness till
They sting me into even praying them
Grant leave to hide my head, resign my state,
And end the coil. Not see now? In a word,
They 'd have me tender them myself my rights
As one incapable;—some cause for that,
Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!
I shall apprise the King he may resume
My rights this moment.
Polyxena. Pause! I dare not think
So ill of Victor.
Charles. Think no ill of him!
Polyxena. —Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer
His purpose be divined thus easily.
And yet—you are the last of a great line;
There 's a great heritage at stake; new days
Seemed to await this newest of the realms
Of Europe:—Charles, you must withstand this!
Charles. Ah—

You dare not then renounce the splendid Court
For one whom all the world despises? Speak!
Polyxena. My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.
Were this as you believe, and I once sure
Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,
I could . . . could? Oh what happiness it were—
To live, my Charles, and die, alone with you!
Charles. I grieve I asked you. To the presence, then!
By this, D'Ormea acquaints the King, no doubt,
He fears I am too simple for mere hints,
And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth
Demonstrating in council what I am.
I have not breathed, I think, these many years!
Polyxena. Why, it may be!—if he desire to wed
That woman, call legitimate her child.
Charles. You see as much? Oh, let his will have way!
You 'll not repent confiding in me, love?
There 's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,
Than Rivoli. I 'll seek him: or, suppose
You hear first how I mean to speak my mind?
—Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure!
I yet may see your Rhine-land, who can tell?
Once away, ever then away! I breathe.
Polyxena. And I too breathe.
Charles. Come, my Polyxena!

KING VICTOR

PART II

Enter King VICTOR, *bearing the Regalia on a cushion, from his apartment. He calls loudly*

Victor. D'Ormea!—for patience fails me, treading thus
Among the obscure trains I have laid,—my knights
Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom,
My son,—D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch—
[*Laying down the crown.*
This fireball to these mute black cold trains—then
Outbreak enough!
[*Contemplating it.*] To lose all, after all!
This, glancing o'er my house for ages—shaped,
Brave meteor, like the crown of Cyprus now,
Jerusalem, Spain, England, every change
The braver,—and when I have clutched a prize
My ancestry died wan with watching for,
To lose it!—by a slip, a fault, a trick
Learnt to advantage once and not unlearned
When past the use,—"just this once more" (I thought)
"Use it with Spain and Austria happily,
"And then away with trick!" An oversight
I 'd have repaired thrice over, any time
These fifty years, must happen now! There 's peace
At length; and I, to make the most of peace,
Ventured my project on our people here,
As needing not their help: which Europe knows,

And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself
(Apart from plausibilities of war)
To crush the new-made King—who ne'er till now
Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot of earth
And laughed at her: my name was left, my sword
Left, all was left! But she can take, she knows,
This crown, herself conceded . . . That 's to try,
Kind Europe! My career 's not closed as yet!
This boy was ever subject to my will,
Timid and tame—the fitter! D'Ormea, too—
What if the sovereign also rid himself
Of thee, his prime of parasites?—I delay!
D'Ormea! [*As* D'Ormea *enters, the* King *seats himself.*
My son, the Prince—attends he?
D'Ormea. Sir,
He does attend. The crown prepared!—it seems
That you persist in your resolve.
Victor. Who 's come?
The chancellor and the chamberlain? My knights?
D'Ormea. The whole Annunziata. If, my liege,
Your fortune had not tottered worse than now . . .
Victor. Del Borgo has drawn up the schedules? mine—
My son's, too? Excellent! Only, beware
Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.
First, you read the Annulment of the Oaths;
Del Borgo follows . . . no, the Prince shall sign;
Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument:
On which, I enter.
D'Ormea. Sir, this may be truth;
You, sir, may do as you affect—may break
Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least
If not a spring remain worth saving! Take
My counsel as I 've counselled many times!
What if the Spaniard and the Austrian threat?

There 's England, Holland, Venice—which ally
Select you?
Victor. Aha! Come, D'Ormea,—"truth"
Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?
I 've broken faith with Venice, Holland, England
—As who knows if not you?
D'Ormea. But why with me
Break faith—with one ally, your best, break faith?
Victor. When first I stumbled on you, Marquis
—'t was
At Mondovi—a little lawyer's clerk . . .
D'Ormea. Therefore your soul's ally!—who
brought you through
Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains enough—
Who simply echoed you in these affairs—
On whom you cannot therefore visit these
Affairs' ill-fortune—whom you trust to guide
You safe (yes, on my soul) through these affairs!
Victor. I was about to notice, had you not
Prevented me, that since that great town kept
With its chicane D'Ormea's satchel stuffed
And D'Ormea's self sufficiently recluse,
He missed a sight,—my naval armament
When I burned Toulon. How the skiff exults
Upon the galliot's wave!—rises its height,
O'ertops it even; but the great wave bursts,
And hell-deep in the horrible profound
Buries itself the galliot: shall the skiff
Think to escape the sea's black trough in turn?
Apply this: you have been my minister
—Next me, above me possibly;—sad post,
Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind;
Who would desiderate the eminence?
You gave your soul to get it; you 'd yet give
Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,

D'Ormea! What if the wave ebbed with me?
Whereas it cants you to another crest;
I toss you to my son; ride out your ride!
D'Ormea. Ah, you so much despise me?
Victor. You, D'Ormea?
Nowise: and I 'll inform you why. A king
Must in his time have many ministers,
And I 've been rash enough to part with mine
When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not one
(. . . Or wait, did Pianezze?—ah, just the same!)
Not one of them, ere his remonstrance reached
The length of yours, but has assured me (commonly
Standing much as you stand,—or nearer, say,
The door to make his exit on his speech)
—I should repent of what I did. D'Ormea,
Be candid, you approached it when I bade you
Prepare the schedules! But you stopped in time,
You have not so assured me: how should I
Despise you then?

Enter CHARLES

Victor [*changing his tone*]. Are you instructed? Do
My order, point by point! About it, sir!
D'Ormea. You so despise me! [*Aside.*] One last stay remains—
The boy's discretion there.
[*To* CHARLES.] For your sake, Prince,
I pleaded, wholly in your interest,
To save you from this fate!
Charles [*aside*]. Must I be told
The Prince was supplicated for—by him?
Victor [*to* D'ORMEA]. Apprise Del Borgo, Spava, and the rest,
Our son attends them; then return.
D'Ormea. One word!

Charles [*aside*]. A moment's pause and they would drive me hence,
I do believe!
D'Ormea [*aside*]. Let but the boy be firm!
Victor. You disobey?
Charles [*to* D'ORMEA]. You do not disobey
Me, at least? Did you promise that or no?
D'Ormea. Sir, I am yours: what would you? Yours am I!
Charles. When I have said what I shall say, 't is like
Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go!
Through you, as through a breast of glass, I see.
And for your conduct, from my youth till now,
Take my contempt! You might have spared me much,
Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed yourself:
That 's over now. Go, ne'er to come again!
D'Ormea. As son, the father—father as, the son!
My wits! My wits! [*Goes.*
Victor [*seated*]. And you, what meant you, pray,
Speaking thus to D'Ormea?
Charles. Let us not
Waste words upon D'Ormea! Those I spent
Have half unsettled what I came to say.
His presence vexes to my very soul.
Victor. One called to manage a kingdom, Charles, needs heart
To bear up under worse annoyances
Than seems D'Ormea—to me, at least.
Charles [*aside*]. Ah, good!
He keeps me to the point. Then be it so.
[*Aloud.*] Last night, sir, brought me certain papers —these—
To be reported on,—your way of late.
Is it last night's result that you demand?

Victor. For God's sake, what has night brought
forth? Pronounce
The . . . what 's your word?—result!
Charles. Sir, that had proved
Quite worthy of your sneer, no doubt:—a few
Lame thoughts, regard for you alone could wring,
Lame as they are, from brains like mine, believe!
As 't is, sir, I am spared both toil and sneer.
These are the papers.
Victor. Well, sir? I suppose
You hardly burned them. Now for your result!
Charles. I never should have done great things
of course,
But . . . oh my father, had you loved me more!
Victor. Loved? [*Aside.*] Has D'Ormea played
me false, I wonder?
[*Aloud.*] Why, Charles, a king's love is diffused—
yourself
May overlook, perchance, your part in it.
Our monarchy is absolutest now
In Europe, or my trouble 's thrown away.
I love, my mode, that subjects each and all
May have the power of loving, all and each,
Their mode: I doubt not, many have their sons
To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long:
I have that crown, this chair, D'Ormea, Charles!
Charles. 'T is well I am a subject then, not you.
Victor [*aside*]. D'Ormea has told him every-
thing.
[*Aloud.*] Aha!
I apprehend you: when all 's said, you take
Your private station to be prized beyond
My own, for instance?
Charles. —Do and ever did
So take it: 't is the method you pursue
That grieves . . .

Victor. These words! Let me express, my friend,
Your thoughts. You penetrate what I supposed
Secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes!
I purpose to resign my crown to you.
Charles. To me?
Victor. Now,—in that chamber.
Charles. You resign
The crown to me?
Victor. And time enough, Charles, sure?
Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years
A crown 's a load. I covet quiet once
Before I die, and summoned you for that.
Charles. 'T is I will speak: you ever hated me.
I bore it,—have insulted me, borne too—
Now you insult yourself; and I remember
What I believed you, what you really are,
And cannot bear it. What! My life has passed
Under your eye, tormented as you know,—
Your whole sagacities, one after one,
At leisure brought to play on me—to prove me
A fool, I thought and I submitted; now
You 'd prove . . . what would you prove me?
Victor. This to me?
I hardly know you!
Charles. Know me? Oh indeed
You do not! Wait till I complain next time
Of my simplicity!—for here 's a sage
Knows the world well, is not to be deceived,
And his experience and his Macchiavels,
D'Ormeas, teach him—what?—that I this while
Have envied him his crown! He has not smiled,
I warrant,—has not eaten, drunk, nor slept,
For I was plotting with my Princess yonder!
Who knows what we might do or might not do?
Go now, be politic, astound the world!

That sentry in the antechamber—nay,
The varlet who disposed this precious trap
[*Pointing to the crown.*
That was to take me—ask them if they think
Their own sons envy them their posts!—Know me!
Victor. But you know me, it seems: so, learn in brief,
My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .
Charles. Tell me, that woman put it in your head!
You were not sole contriver of the scheme,
My father!
Victor. Now observe me, sir! I jest
Seldom—on these points, never. Here, I say,
The knights assemble to see me concede,
And you accept, Sardinia's crown.
Charles. Farewell!
'T were vain to hope to change this: I can end it.
Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk
Into obscurity: I 'll die for you,
But not annoy you with my presence. Sir,
Farewell! Farewell!

Enter D'ORMEA

D'Ormea [*aside*]. Ha, sure he 's changed again—
Means not to fall into the cunning trap!
Then Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor!
Victor [*suddenly placing the crown upon the head of* CHARLES]. D'Ormea, your King!
[*To* CHARLES]. My son, obey me! Charles,
Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,
Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks real!
My reasons after; reason upon reason
After: but now, obey me! Trust in me!
By this, you save Sardinia, you save me!
Why, the boy swoons! [*To* D'ORMEA.] Come this side!

D'Ormea [*as* CHARLES *turns from him to* VICTOR].
You persist?

Victor. Yes, I conceive the gesture's meaning.
'Faith,
He almost seems to hate you: how is that?
Be re-assured, my Charles! Is 't over now?
Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains
To do! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads
The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,
Then I sign; after that, come back to me.

D'Ormea. Sir, for the last time, pause!

Victor. Five minutes longer
I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate—
And I 'll so turn those minutes to account
That . . . Ay, you recollect me! [*Aside.*] Could
I bring
My foolish mind to undergo the reading
That Act of Abdication!

[*As* CHARLES *motions* D'ORMEA *to precede him.*
Thanks, dear Charles!

[CHARLES *and* D'ORMEA *retire.*

Victor. A novel feature in the boy,—indeed
Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite right,
This earnest tone: your truth, now, for effect!
It answers every purpose: with that look,
That voice,—I hear him: "I began no treaty,"
(He speaks to Spain), "nor ever dreamed of this
"You show me; this I from my soul regret;
"But if my father signed it, bid not me
"Dishonour him—who gave me all, beside:"
And, "True," says Spain, "'t were harsh to visit
that
"Upon the Prince." Then come the nobles troop-
ing:
"I grieve at these exactions—I had cut
"This hand off ere impose them; but shall I

"Undo my father's deed?"—and they confer:
"Doubtless he was no party, after all;
"Give the Prince time!"
Ay, give us time, but time!
Only, he must not, when the dark day comes,
Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.
We 'll have no child's play, no desponding fits,
No Charles at each cross turn entreating Victor
To take his crown again. Guard against that!

Enter D'Ormea

Long live King Charles!
No—Charles's counsellor!
Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest?
D'Ormea. "King Charles!" What then may you be?
Victor. Anything!
A country gentleman that, cured of bustle,
Now beats a quick retreat toward Chambery,
Would hunt and hawk and leave you noisy folk
To drive your trade without him. I 'm Count Remont—
Count Tende—any little place's Count!
D'Ormea. Then Victor, Captain against Catinat
At Staffarde, where the French beat you; and Duke
At Turin, where you beat the French; King late
Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia,
—Now, "any little place's Count"—
Victor. Proceed!
D'Ormea. Breaker of vows to God, who crowned you first;
Breaker of vows to man, who kept you since;
Most profligate to me who outraged God
And man to serve you, and am made pay crimes
I was but privy to, by passing thus

To your imbecile son—who, well you know,
Must—(when the people here, and nations there,
Clamour for you the main delinquent, slipped
From King to—"Count of any little place")
Must needs surrender me, all in his reach,—
I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end—
See you on your return—(you will return)—
To him you trust, a moment . . .
Victor. Trust him? How?
My poor man, merely a prime-minister,
Make me know where my trust errs!
D'Ormea. In his fear,
His love, his—— but discover for yourself
What you are weakest, trusting in!
Victor. Aha,
D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this
In your repertory? You know old Victor—
Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash—(I 've heard
Talkers who little thought the King so close)
Felicitous now, were 't not, to provoke him
To clean forget, one minute afterward,
His solemn act, and call the nobles back
And pray them give again the very power
He has abjured?—for the dear sake of what?
Vengeance on you, D'Ormea! No: such am I,
Count Tende or Count anything you please,
—Only, the same that did the things you say,
And, among other things you say not, used
Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—you
I used, and now, since you will have it so,
Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the midst,
You and your works. Why, what on earth beside
Are you made for, you sort of ministers?
D'Ormea. Not left, though, to my fate! Your witless son

Has more wit than to load himself with lumber:
He foils you that way, and I follow you.
Victor. Stay with my son—protect the weaker side!
D'Ormea. Ay, to be tossed the people like a rag,
And flung by them for Spain and Austria's sport,
Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy!
Victor. Prevent, beside,
My own return!
D'Ormea. That 's half prevented now!
'T will go hard but you find a wondrous charm
In exile, to discredit me. The Alps,
Silk-mills to watch, vines asking vigilance—
Hounds open for the stag, your hawk 's a-wing—
Brave days that wait the Louis of the South,
Italy's Janus!
Victor. So, the lawyer's clerk
Won't tell me that I shall repent!
D'Ormea. You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent?
Victor. Whene'er
Sufficient time 's elapsed for that, you judge!
[*Shouts inside* "KING CHARLES!"
D'Ormea. Do you repent?
Victor [*after a slight pause*]. . . . I 've kept them waiting? Yes!
Come in, complete the Abdication, sir!
[*They go out.*

Enter POLYXENA

Polyxena. A shout! The sycophants are free of Charles!
Oh is not this like Italy? No fruit
Of his or my distempered fancy, this,

But just an ordinary fact! Beside,
Here they've set forms for such proceedings; Victor
Imprisoned his own mother: he should know,
If any, how a son 's to be deprived
Of a son's right. Our duty 's palpable.
Ne'er was my husband for the wily king
And the unworthy subjects: be it so!
Come you safe out of them, my Charles! Our life
Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I dreamed
Might prove your lot; for strength was shut in you
None guessed but I—strength which, untrammelled once,
Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry—
Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,
Simplicity and utter truthfulness
—All which, they shout to lose!
So, now my work
Begins—to save him from regret. Save Charles
Regret?—the noble nature! He 's not made
Like these Italians: 't is a German soul.

CHARLES *enters crowned*

Oh, where 's the King's heir? Gone!—the Crown Prince? Gone!—
Where 's Savoy? Gone!—Sardinia? Gone!
But Charles
Is left! And when my Rhine-land bowers arrive,
If he looked almost handsome yester-twilight
As his grey eyes seemed widening into black
Because I praised him, then how will he look?
Farewell, you stripped and whited mulberry-trees
Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine!
Now I 'll teach you my language: I 'm not forced
To speak Italian now, Charles?

[*She sees the crown.*] What is this?
Answer me—who has done this? Answer!
Charles. He!
I am King now.
Polyxena. Oh worst, worst, worst of all!
Tell me! What, Victor? He has made you King?
What 's he then? What 's to follow this? You,
King?
Charles. Have I done wrong? Yes, for you
were not by!
Polyxena. Tell me from first to last.
Charles. Hush—a new world
Brightens before me; he is moved away
—The dark form that eclipsed it, he subsides
Into a shape supporting me like you,
And I, alone, tend upward, more and more
Tend upward: I am grown Sardinia's King.
Polyxena. Now stop: was not this Victor, Duke
of Savoy
At ten years old?
Charles. He was.
Polyxena. And the Duke spent
Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil
To be—what?
Charles. King.
Polyxena. Then why unking himself?
Charles. Those years are cause enough.
Polyxena. The only cause?
Charles. Some new perplexities.
Polyxena. Which you can solve
Although he cannot?
Charles. He assures me so.
Polyxena. And this he means shall last—how
long?
Charles. How long?
Think you I fear the perils I confront?

He 's praising me before the people's face—
My people!
Polyxena. Then he 's changed—grown kind, the King?
Where can the trap be?
Charles. Heart and soul I pledge!
My father, could I guard the crown you gained,
Transmit as I received it,—all good else
Would I surrender!
Polyxena. Ah, it opens then
Before you, all you dreaded formerly?
You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles?
Charles. So much to dare? The better;—much to dread?
The better. I 'll adventure though alone.
Triumph or die, there 's Victor still to witness
Who dies or triumphs—either way, alone!
Polyxena. Once I had found my share in triumph, Charles,
Or death.
Charles. But you are I! But you I call
To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I tendered Heaven
A moment since. I will deserve the crown!
Polyxena. You will. [*Aside.*] No doubt it were a glorious thing
For any people, if a heart like his
Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap.

Enter VICTOR

'T is he must show me.
Victor. So, the mask falls off
An old man's foolish love at last. Spare thanks!
I know you, and Polyxena I know.
Here 's Charles—I am his guest now—does he bid me
Be seated? And my light-haired blue-eyed child

Must not forget the old man far away
At Chambery, who dozes while she reigns.
Polyxena. Most grateful shall we now be, talking least
Of gratitude—indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must need to say
To Charles.
Charles. Pray speak, sir!
Victor. 'Faith, not much to say:
Only what shows itself, you once i' the point
Of sight. You 're now the King: you 'll comprehend
Much you may oft have wondered at—the shifts,
Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.
For what 's our post? Here 's Savoy and here 's Piedmont,
Here's Montferrat—a breadth here, a space there—
To o'ersweep all these, what 's one weapon worth?
I often think of how they fought in Greece:
(Or Rome, which was it? You 're the scholar, Charles!)
You made a front-thrust? But if your shield too
Were not adroitly planted, some shrewd knave
Reached you behind; and him foiled, straight if thong
And handle of that shield were not cast loose,
And you enabled to outstrip the wind,
Fresh foes assailed you, either side; 'scape these,
And reach your place of refuge—e'en then, odds
If the gate opened unless breath enough
Were left in you to make its lord a speech.
Oh, you will see!
Charles. No: straight on shall I go,
Truth helping; win with it or die with it.

Victor. 'Faith, Charles, you 're not made
Europe's fighting-man!
The barrier-guarder, if you please. You clutch
Hold and consolidate, with envious France
This side, with Austria that, the territory
I held—ay, and will hold . . . which *you* shall hold
Despite the couple! But I 've surely earned
Exemption from these weary politics,
—The privilege to prattle with my son
And daughter here, though Europe wait the while.
Polyxena. Nay, sir,—at Chambery, away for ever,
As soon you will be, 't is farewell we bid you:
Turn these few fleeting moments to account!
'T is just as though it were a death.
Victor. Indeed!
Polyxena [*aside*]. Is the trap there?
Charles. Ay, call this parting—death!
The sacreder your memory becomes.
If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back
My father?
Victor. I mean . . .
Polyxena [*who watches* VICTOR *narrowly this while*]. Your father does not mean
You should be ruling for your father's sake:
It is your people must concern you wholly
Instead of him. You mean this, sir? (He drops
My hand!)
Charles. That people is now part of me.
Victor. About the people! I took certain measures
Some short time since . . . Oh, I know well, you know
But little of my measures! These affect
The nobles; we 've resumed some grants, imposed
A tax or two: prepare yourself, in short,

For clamour on that score. Mark me : you yield
No jot of aught entrusted you !
Polyxena. No jot
You yield !
Charles. My father, when I took the oath,
Although my eye might stray in search of yours,
I heard it, understood it, promised God
What you require. Till from this eminence
He move me, here I keep, nor shall concede
The meanest of my rights.
Victor [*aside*]. The boy 's a fool !
—Or rather, I 'm a fool : for, what 's wrong here ?
To-day the sweets of reigning : let to-morrow
Be ready with its bitters.

Enter D'ORMEA

There 's beside
Somewhat to press upon your notice first.
Charles. Then why delay it for an instant, sir ?
That Spanish claim perchance ? And, now you speak,
—This morning, my opinion was mature,
Which, boy-like, I was bashful in producing
To one I ne'er am like to fear in future !
My thought is formed upon that Spanish claim.
Victor. Betimes indeed. Not now, Charles !
You require
A host of papers on it.
D'Ormea [*coming forward*]. Here they are.
[*To* CHARLES.] I, sir, was minister and much beside
Of the late monarch ; to say little, him
I served : on you I have, to say e'en less,
No claim. This case contains those papers : with them
I tender you my office.
Victor [*hastily*]. Keep him, Charles !

There 's reason for it—many reasons: you
Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there,—but
He 's mixed up in this matter—he 'll desire
To quit you, for occasions known to me:
Do not accept those reasons: have him stay!
Polyxena [*aside*]. His minister thrust on us!
Charles [*to* D'ORMEA]. Sir, believe,
In justice to myself, you do not need
E'en this commending: howsoe'er might seem
My feelings toward you, as a private man,
They quit me in the vast and untried field
Of action. Though I shall myself (as late
In your own hearing I engaged to do)
Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help
Is necessary. Think the past forgotten
And serve me now!
D'Ormea. I did not offer you
My service—would that I could serve you, sir!
As for the Spanish matter . . .
Victor. But despatch
At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,
Before the living! Help to house me safe
Ere with D'Ormea you set the world a-gape!
Here is a paper—will you overlook
What I propose reserving for my needs?
I get as far from you as possible:
Here 's what I reckon my expenditure.
Charles [*reading*]. A miserable fifty thousand crowns—
Victor. Oh, quite enough for country gentlemen!
Beside the exchequer happens . . . but find out
All that, yourself!
Charles [*still reading*]. "Count Tende"—what means this?
Victor. Me: you were but an infant when I burst
Through the defile of Tende upon France.

Had only my allies kept true to me!
No matter. Tende 's, then, a name I take
Just as . . .
D'Ormea. —The Marchioness Sebastian takes
The name of Spigno.
Charles. How, sir?
Victor [*to* D'ORMEA]. Fool! All that
Was for my own detailing. [*To* CHARLES.] That anon!
Charles [*to* D'ORMEA]. Explain what you have said, sir!
D'Ormea. I supposed
The marriage of the King to her I named,
Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks,
Was not to be one, now he 's Count.
Polyxena [*aside*]. With us
The minister—with him the mistress!
Charles [*to* VICTOR]. No—
Tell me you have not taken her—that woman
To live with, past recall!
Victor. And where 's the crime . . .
Polyxena [*to* CHARLES]. True, sir, this is a matter past recall
And past your cognizance. A day before,
And you had been compelled to note this: now,—
Why note it? The King saved his House from shame:
What the Count did, is no concern of yours.
Charles [*after a pause*]. The Spanish claim, D'Ormea!
Victor. Why, my son,
I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in fact,
Spoils everything: though I was overreached,
A younger brain, we 'll trust, may extricate
Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea,
Inform the King!

D'Ormea [*without regarding* VICTOR, *and leisurely*]. Thus stands the case with Spain :
When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper
Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .
Victor. I tell you, that stands over! Let that rest!
There is the policy!
Charles [*to* D'ORMEA]. Thus much I know,
And more—too much : the remedy?
D'Ormea. Of course!
No glimpse of one.
Victor. No remedy at all!
It makes the remedy itself—time makes it.
D'Ormea [*to* CHARLES]. But if . . .
Victor [*still more hastily*]. In fine, I shall take care of that :
And, with another project that I have . . .
D'Ormea [*turning on him*]. Oh, since Count Tende means to take again
King Victor's crown!—
Polyxena [*throwing herself at* VICTOR'S *feet*]. E'en now retake it, sir!
Oh speak! We are your subjects both, once more!
Say it—a word effects it! You meant not,
Nor do mean now, to take it : but you must!
'T is in you—in your nature—and the shame 's
Not half the shame 't would grow to afterwards!
Charles. Polyxena!
Polyxena. A word recalls the knights—
Say it! What 's promising and what 's the past?
Say you are still King Victor!
D'Ormea. Better say
The Count repents, in brief! [VICTOR *rises.*
Charles. With such a crime
I have not charged you, sir!
Polyxena. (Charles turns from me!)

SECOND YEAR, 1731.—KING CHARLES

PART I

Enter Queen POLYXENA *and* D'ORMEA.—*A pause*

Polyxena. And now, sir, what have you to say?
D'Ormea. Count Tende . . .
Polyxena. Affirm not I betrayed you; you resolve
On uttering this strange intelligence
—Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach
The capital, because you know King Charles
Tarries a day or two at Evian Baths
Behind me:—but take warning,—here and thus
[*Seating herself in the royal seat.*
I listen, if I listen—not your friend.
Explicitly the statement, if you still
Persist to urge it on me, must proceed:
I am not made for aught else.
D'Ormea. Good! Count Tende . . .
Polyxena. I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint
King Charles
Who even more mistrusts you.
D'Ormea. Does he so?
Polyxena. Why should he not?
D'Ormea. Ay, why not? Motives, seek
You virtuous people, motives! Say, I serve
God at the devil's bidding—will that do?
I 'm proud: our people have been pacified,
Really I know not how—
Polyxena. By truthfulness.

D'Ormea. Exactly; that shows I had nought to do
With pacifying them. Our foreign perils
Also exceed my means to stay: but here
'T is otherwise, and my pride 's piqued. Count Tende
Completes a full year's absence: would you, madam,
Have the old monarch back, his mistress back,
His measures back? I pray you, act upon
My counsel, or they will be.
Polyxena. When?
D'Ormea. Let 's think.
Home-matters settled—Victor 's coming now;
Let foreign matters settle—Victor 's here
Unless I stop him; as I will, this way.
Polyxena [*reading the papers he presents*]. If this should prove a plot 'twixt you and Victor?
You seek annoyances to give the pretext
For what you say you fear.
D'Ormea. Oh, possibly!
I go for nothing. Only show King Charles
That thus Count Tende purposes return,
And style me his inviter, if you please!
Polyxena. Half of your tale is true; most like, the Count
Seeks to return: but why stay you with us?
To aid in such emergencies.
D'Ormea. Keep safe
Those papers: or, to serve me, leave no proof
I thus have counselled! When the Count returns,
And the King abdicates, 't will stead me little
To have thus counselled.
Polyxena. The King abdicate!
D'Ormea. He 's good, we knew long since—wise, we discover—

Firm, let us hope :—but I 'd have gone to work
With him away. Well!
[CHARLES *without.*] In the Council Chamber?
D'Ormea. All 's lost!
Polyxena. Oh, surely not King Charles!
He 's changed—
That 's not this year's care-burthened voice and step:
'T is last year's step, the Prince's voice!
D'Ormea. I know.
[*Enter* CHARLES :—D'ORMEA *retiring a little.*
Charles. Now wish me joy, Polyxena! Wish it me
The old way! [*She embraces him.*
There was too much cause for that!
But I have found myself again. What news
At Turin? Oh, if you but felt the load
I 'm free of—free! I said this year would end
Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God!
Polyxena. How, Charles?
Charles. You do not guess?
The day I found
Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,
And how my father was involved in it,—
Of course, I vowed to rest and smile no more
Until I cleared his name from obloquy.
We did the people right—'t was much to gain
That point, redress our nobles' grievance, too—
But that took place here, was no crying shame:
All must be done abroad,—if I abroad
Appeased the justly-angered Powers, destroyed
The scandal, took down Victor's name at last
From a bad eminence, I then might breathe
And rest! No moment was to lose. Behold
The proud result—a Treaty, Austria, Spain
Agree to—

D'Ormea [*aside*]. I shall merely stipulate
For an experienced headsman.
Charles. Not a soul
Is compromised: the blotted past 's a blank:
Even D'Ormea escapes unquestioned. See!
It reached me from Vienna; I remained
At Evian to despatch the Count his news;
'T is gone to Chambery a week ago—
And here am I: do I deserve to feel
Your warm white arms around me?
D'Ormea [*coming forward*]. He knows that?
Charles. What, in Heaven's name, means this?
D'Ormea. He knows that matters
Are settled at Vienna? Not too late!
Plainly, unless you post this very hour
Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambery
And take precautions I acquaint you with,
Your father will return here.
Charles. Are you crazed,
D'Ormea? Here? For what? As well return
To take his crown!
D'Ormea. He will return for that.
Charles [*to* POLYXENA]. You have not listened
to this man?
Polyxena. He spoke
About your safety—and I listened.
[*He disengages himself from her arms.*
Charles [*to* D'ORMEA]. What
Apprised you of the Count's intentions?
D'Ormea. Me?
His heart, sir; you may not be used to read
Such evidence however; therefore read
[*Pointing to* POLYXENA'S *papers.*
My evidence.
Charles [*to* POLYXENA]. Oh, worthy this of you!
And of your speech I never have forgotten,

Though I professed forgetfulness; which haunts me
As if I did not know how false it was;
Which made me toil unconsciously thus long
That there might be no least occasion left
For aught of its prediction coming true!
And now, when there is left no least occasion
To instigate my father to such crime—
When I might venture to forget (I hoped)
That speech and recognize Polyxena—
Oh worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,
That plague! D'Ormea at your ear, his slanders
Still in your hand! Silent?

Polyxena. As the wronged are.

Charles. And you, D'Ormea, since when have you presumed
To spy upon my father? I conceive
What that wise paper shows, and easily.
Since when?

D'Ormea. The when and where and how belong
To me. 'T is sad work, but I deal in such.
You ofttimes serve yourself; I 'd serve you here:
Use makes me not so squeamish. In a word,
Since the first hour he went to Chambery,
Of his seven servants, five have I suborned.

Charles. You hate my father?

D'Ormea. Oh, just as you will!
[*Looking at* POLYXENA.
A minute since, I loved him—hate him, now!
What matter?—if you ponder just one thing:
Has he that treaty?—he is setting forward
Already. Are your guards here?

Charles. Well for you
They are not! [*To* POLYXENA.] Him I knew of old, but you—
To hear that pickthank, further his designs!
[*To* D'ORMEA.

Guards?—were they here, I 'd bid them, for your trouble,
Arrest you.
D'Ormea. Guards you shall not want. I lived
The servant of your choice, not of your need.
You never greatly needed me till now
That you discard me. This is my arrest.
Again I tender you my charge its duty
Would bid me press you read those documents.
Here, sir! [*Offering his badge of office.*
Charles [*taking it*]. The papers also! Do you think
I dare not read them?
Polyxena. Read them, sir!
Charles. They prove,
My father, still a month within the year
Since he so solemnly consigned it me,
Means to resume his crown? They shall prove that,
Or my best dungeon . . .
D'Ormea. Even say, Chambery!
'T is vacant, I surmise, by this.
Charles. You prove
Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go there!
Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil
Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two! Do say,
You 'll see the falsehood of the charges proved!
Do say, at least, you wish to see them proved
False charges—my heart's love of other times!
Polyxena. Ah, Charles!
Charles [*to* D'ORMEA]. Precede me, sir!
D'Ormea. And I 'm at length
A martyr for the truth! No end, they say,
Of miracles. My conscious innocence!
[*As they go out, enter—by the middle door, at which he pauses*—VICTOR.
Victor. Sure I heard voices? No. Well, I do best

To make at once for this, the heart o' the place.
The old room! Nothing changed! So near my seat,
D'Ormea? [*Pushing away the stool which is by the* KING'S *chair.*
I want that meeting over first,
I know not why. Tush, he, D'Ormea, slow
To hearten me, the supple knave? That burst
Of spite so eased him! He 'll inform me . . .
What?
Why come I hither? All 's in rough: let all
Remain rough. There 's full time to draw back—
nay,
There 's nought to draw back from, as yet; whereas,
If reason should be, to arrest a course
Of error—reason good, to interpose
And save, as I have saved so many times,
Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,
Relieve him of a weight that proves too much—
Now is the time,—or now, or never.
'Faith,
This kind of step is pitiful, not due
To Charles, this stealing back—hither, because
He 's from his capital! Oh Victor! Victor!
But thus it is. The age of crafty men
Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry off
Dissimulation; we may intersperse
Extenuating passages of strength,
Ardour, vivacity, and wit—may turn
E'en guile into a voluntary grace:
But one's old age, when graces drop away
And leave guile the pure staple of our lives—
Ah, loathsome!
Not so—or why pause I? Turin
Is mine to have, were I so minded, for
The asking; all the army 's mine—I 've witnessed
Each private fight beneath me; all the Court 's

Mine too ; and, best of all, D'Ormea s still
D'Ormea and mine. There 's some grace clinging yet.
Had I decided on this step, ere midnight
I 'd take the crown.
No. Just this step to rise
Exhausts me. Here am I arrived : the rest
Must be done for me. Would I could sit here
And let things right themselves, the masque unmasque
Of the old King, crownless, grey hair and hot blood,—
The young King, crowned, but calm before his time,
They say,—the eager mistress with her taunts,—
And the sad earnest wife who motions me
Away—ay, there she knelt to me ! E'en yet
I can return and sleep at Chambery
A dream out.
Rather shake it off at Turin,
King Victor ! Say : to Turin—yes, or no ?
'T is this relentless noonday-lighted chamber,
Lighted like life but silent as the grave,
That disconcerts me. That 's the change must strike.
No silence last year ! Some one flung doors wide
(Those two great doors which scrutinize me now)
And out I went 'mid crowds of men—men talking,
Men watching if my lip fell or brow knit,
Men saw me safe forth, put me on my road :
That makes the misery of this return.
Oh had a battle done it ! Had I dropped,
Haling some battle, three entire days old,
Hither and thither by the forehead—dropped
In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France—
Spurned on its horns or underneath its hooves,

When the spent monster went upon its knees
To pad and pash the prostrate wretch—I, Victor,
Sole to have stood up against France, beat down
By inches, brayed to pieces finally
In some vast unimaginable charge,
A flying hell of horse and foot and guns
Over me, and all 's lost, for ever lost,
There 's no more Victor when the world wakes up!
Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,
Throughout the world. Then after (as whole days
After, you catch at intervals faint noise
Through the stiff crust of frozen blood)—there creeps
A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,
That a strange old man, with face outworn for wounds,
Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,
Begging a pittance that may help him find
His Turin out; what scorn and laughter follow
The coin you fling into his cap! And last,
Some bright morn, how men crowd about the midst
O' the market-place, where takes the old king breath
Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-gate
Wide ope!
To Turin, yes or no—or no?

Re-enter CHARLES *with papers*

Charles. Just as I thought! A miserable falsehood
Of hirelings discontented with their pay
And longing for enfranchisement! A few
Testy expressions of old age that thinks
To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves
By means that suit their natures!
[*Tearing them.*] Thus they shake

My faith in Victor!
[*Turning, he discovers* VICTOR.
Victor [*after a pause*]. Not at Evian, Charles?
What 's this? Why do you run to close the doors?
No welcome for your father?
Charles [*aside*]. Not his voice!
What would I give for one imperious tone
Of the old sort! That 's gone for ever.
Victor. Must
I ask once more . . .
Charles. No—I concede it, sir!
You are returned for . . . true, your health declines;
True, Chambery 's a bleak unkindly spot;
You 'd choose one fitter for your final lodge—
Veneria, or Moncaglier—ay, that 's close
And I concede it.
Victor. I received advices
Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter,
Dated from Evian Baths . . .
Charles. And you forbore
To visit me at Evian, satisfied
The work I had to do would fully task
The little wit I have, and that your presence
Would only disconcert me—
Victor. Charles?
Charles. —Me, set
For ever in a foreign course to yours,
And . . .
Sir, this way of wile were good to catch,
But I have not the sleight of it. The truth!
Though I sink under it! What brings you here?
Victor. Not hope of this reception, certainly,
From one who 'd scarce assume a stranger mode
Of speech, did I return to bring about
Some awfulest calamity!
Charles. —You mean,

Did you require your crown again! Oh yes,
I should speak otherwise! But turn not that
To jesting! Sir, the truth! Your health declines?
Is aught deficient in your equipage?
Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,
And foil the malice of the world which laughs
At petty discontents; but I shall care
That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak!
Victor [*aside*]. Here is the grateful much-professing son
Prepared to worship me, for whose sole sake
I think to waive my plans of public good!
[*Aloud.*] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take once more
My crown, were so disposed to plague myself,
What would be warrant for this bitterness?
I gave it—grant I would resume it—well?
Charles. I should say simply—leaving out the why
And how—you made me swear to keep that crown:
And as you then intended . . .
Victor. Fool! What way
Could I intend or not intend? As man,
With a man's will, when I say "I intend,"
I can intend up to a certain point,
No farther. I intended to preserve
The crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole:
And if events arise demonstrating
The way, I hoped should guard it, rather like
To lose it . . .
Charles. Keep within your sphere and mine!
It is God's province we usurp on, else.
Here, blindfold through the maze of things we walk
By a slight clue of false, true, right and wrong;
All else is rambling and presumption. I
Have sworn to keep this kingdom: there 's my truth.

Victor. Truth, boy, is here, within my breast; and in
Your recognition of it, truth is, too;
And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing
With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,
—In its success, this falsehood turns, again,
Truth for the world. But you are right: these themes
Are over-subtle. I should rather say
In such a case, frankly,—it fails, my scheme:
I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,
What I must bring about. I interpose
On your behalf—with my son's good in sight—
To hold what he is nearly letting go,
Confirm his title, add a grace perhaps.
There 's Sicily, for instance,—granted me
And taken back, some years since: till I give
That island with the rest, my work 's half done.
For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .

Charles. Our sakes are one; and that, you could not say,
Because my answer would present itself
Forthwith:—a year has wrought an age's change.
This people 's not the people now, you once
Could benefit; nor is my policy
Your policy.

Victor [*with an outburst*]. I know it! You undo
All I have done—my life of toil and care!
I left you this the absolutest rule
In Europe: do you think I sit and smile,
Bid you throw power to the populace—
See my Sardinia, that has kept apart,
Join in the mad and democratic whirl
Whereto I see all Europe haste full tide?
England casts off her kings; France mimics England:

This realm I hoped was safe. Yet here I talk,
When I can save it, not by force alone,
But bidding plagues, which follow sons like you,
Fasten upon my disobedient . . .
[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely
I could say this—if minded so—my son?
Charles. You could not. Bitterer curses than your curse
Have I long since denounced upon myself
If I misused my power. In fear of these
I entered on those measures—will abide
By them: so, I should say, Count Tende . . .
Victor. No!
But no! But if, my Charles, your—more than old—
Half-foolish father urged these arguments,
And then confessed them futile, but said plainly
That he forgot his promise, found his strength
Fail him, had thought at savage Chambery
Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,
And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—
Pined for the pleasant places he had built
When he was fortunate and young—
Charles. My father!
Victor. Stay yet!—and if he said he could not die
Deprived of baubles he had put aside,
He deemed, for ever—of the Crown that binds
Your brain up, whole, sound and impregnable,
Creating kingliness—the Sceptre too,
Whose mere wind, should you wave it, back would beat
Invaders—and the golden Ball which throbs
As if you grasped the palpitating heart
Indeed o' the realm, to mould as choose you may!
—If I must totter up and down the streets
My sires built, where myself have introduced
And fostered laws and letters, sciences,

The civil and the military arts!
Stay, Charles! I see you letting me pretend
To live my former self once more—King Victor,
The venturous yet politic: they style me
Again, the Father of the Prince: friends wink
Good-humouredly at the delusion you
So sedulously guard from all rough truths
That else would break upon my dotage!—You—
Whom now I see preventing my old shame—
I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale—
For is 't not in your breast my brow is hid?
Is not your hand extended? Say you not . . .

Enter D'ORMEA, *leading in* POLYXENA

Polyxena [*advancing and withdrawing* CHARLES—*to* VICTOR]. In this conjuncture even, he would say
(Though with a moistened eye and quivering lip)
The suppliant is my father. I must save
A great man from himself, nor see him fling
His well-earned fame away: there must not follow
Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth
So absolute: no enemy shall learn,
He thrust his child 'twixt danger and himself,
And, when that child somehow stood danger out,
Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin Charles
—Body, that 's much,—and soul, that 's more—and realm,
That 's most of all! No enemy shall say . . .

D'Ormea. Do you repent, sir?

Victor [*resuming himself*]. D'Ormea? This is well!
Worthily done, King Charles, craftily done!
Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear
The little your importunate father thrusts

Himself on you to say!—Ah, they 'll correct
The amiable blind facility
You show in answering his peevish suit.
What can he need to sue for? Thanks, D'Ormea!
You have fulfilled your office: but for you,
The old Count might have drawn some few more livres
To swell his income! Had you, lady, missed
The moment, a permission might be granted
To buttress up my ruinous old pile!
But you remember properly the list
Of wise precautions I took when I gave
Nearly as much away—to reap the fruits
I should have looked for!
Charles. Thanks, sir: degrade me,
So you remain yourself! Adieu!
Victor. I 'll not
Forget it for the future, nor presume
Next time to slight such mediators! Nay—
Had I first moved them both to intercede,
I might secure a chamber in Moncaglier
—Who knows?
Charles. Adieu!
Victor. You bid me this adieu
With the old spirit?
Charles. Adieu!
Victor. Charles—Charles!
Charles. Adieu!
[VICTOR *goes.*
Charles. You were mistaken, Marquis, as you hear.
'T was for another purpose the Count came.
The Count desires Moncaglier. Give the order!
D'Ormea [*leisurely*]. Your minister has lost your confidence,

Asserting late, for his own purposes,
Count Tende would . . .
Charles [*flinging his badge back*]. Be still the minister!
And give a loose to your insulting joy;
It irks me more thus stifled than expressed:
Loose it!
D'Ormea. There 's none to loose, alas! I see
I never am to die a martyr.
Polyxena. Charles!
Charles. No praise, at least, Polyxena—no praise!

KING CHARLES

PART II

D'ORMEA, *seated, folding papers he has been examining*

This at the last effects it: now, King Charles
Or else King Victor—that 's a balance: but now,
D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn
O' the scale,—that 's sure enough. A point to solve,
My masters, moralists, whate'er your style!
When you discover why I push myself
Into a pitfall you 'd pass safely by,
Impart to me among the rest! No matter.
Prompt are the righteous ever with their rede
To us the wrongful; lesson them this once!
For safe among the wicked are you set,
D'Ormea! We lament life's brevity,
Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and ten,
Nor stick to call the quarter roundly "life."
D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty years;
A tree so long was stunted; afterward,
What if it grew, continued growing, till
No fellow of the forest equalled it?
'T was a stump then; a stump it still must be:
While forward saplings, at the outset checked,
In virtue of that first sprout keep their style
Amid the forest's green fraternity.
Thus I shoot up to surely get lopped down
And bound up for the burning. Now for it!

Enter CHARLES *and* POLYXENA *with* Attendants

D'Ormea [*rises*]. Sir, in the due discharge of this my office—
This enforced summons of yourself from Turin,
And the disclosure I am bound to make
To-night,—there must already be, I feel,
So much that wounds . . .
Charles. Well, sir?
D'Ormea. —That I, perchance,
May utter also what, another time,
Would irk much,—it may prove less irksome now.
Charles. What would you utter?
D'Ormea. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event: for you I grieve,
E'en grieve for . . .
Charles. Tush, another time for talk!
My kingdom is in imminent danger?
D'Ormea. Let
The Count communicate with France—its King,
His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for this,
Though for no other war.
Charles. First for the levies:
What forces can I muster presently?
[D'ORMEA *delivers papers which* CHARLES *inspects.*
Charles. Good—very good. Montorio . . . how is this?
—Equips me double the old complement
Of soldiers?
D'Ormea. Since his land has been relieved
From double imposts, this he manages:
But under the late monarch . . .
Charles. Peace! I know.
Count Spava has omitted mentioning
What proxy is to head these troops of his.

D'Ormea. Count Spava means to head his
troops himself.
Something to fight for now; "Whereas," says he,
"Under the sovereign's father" . . .
Charles. It would seem
That all my people love me.
D'Ormea. Yes.
[*To* POLYXENA *while* CHARLES *continues to inspect the papers.*
A temper
Like Victor's may avail to keep a state;
He terrifies men and they fall not off;
Good to restrain: best, if restraint were all.
But, with the silent circle round him, ends
Such sway: our King's begins precisely there.
For to suggest, impel and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may slight,
In time of peace, the King who brought them
peace:
In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more than fear.
They love you, sir!
Charles [*to* Attendants]. Bring the regalia forth!
Quit the room! And now, Marquis, answer me!
Why should the King of France invade my realm?
D'Ormea. Why? Did I not acquaint your
Majesty
An hour ago?
Charles. I choose to hear again
What then I heard.
D'Ormea. Because, sir, as I said,
Your father is resolved to have his crown
At any risk; and, as I judge, calls in
The foreigner to aid him.
Charles. And your reason
For saying this?
D'Ormea [*aside*]. Ay, just his father's way!

[*To* CHARLES.] The Count wrote yesterday to your
forces' Chief,
Rhebinder—made demand of help—
Charles. To try
Rhebinder—he 's of alien blood : aught else ?
D'Ormea. Receiving a refusal,—some hours
after,
The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver
The Act of Abdication : he refusing,
Or hesitating, rather—
Charles. What ensued ?
D'Ormea. At midnight, only two hours since,
at Turin,
He rode in person to the citadel
With one attendant, to Soccorso gate,
And bade the governor, San Remi, open—
Admit him.
Charles. For a purpose I divine.
These three were faithful, then ?
D'Ormea. They told it me.
And I—
Charles. Most faithful—
D'Ormea. Tell it you—with this
Moreover of my own : if, an hour hence,
You have not interposed, the Count will be
O' the road to France for succour.
Charles. Very good !
You do your duty now to me your monarch
Fully, I warrant ?—have, that is, your project
For saving both of us disgrace, no doubt ?
D'Ormea. I give my counsel,—and the only one.
A month since, I besought you to employ
Restraints which had prevented many a pang :
But now the harsher course must be pursued.
These papers, made for the emergency,
Will pain you to subscribe : this is a list

Of those suspected merely—men to watch ;
This—of the few of the Count's very household
You must, however reluctantly, arrest ;
While here 's a method of remonstrance—sure
Not stronger than the case demands—to take
With the Count's self.
Charles. Deliver those three papers.
Polyxena [*while* CHARLES *inspects them—to* D'ORMEA]. Your measures are not over-harsh, sir : France
Will hardly be deterred from her intents
By these.
D'Ormea. If who proposes might dispose,
I could soon satisfy you. Even these,
Hear what he 'll say at my presenting !
Charles [*who has signed them*]. There !
About the warrants ! You 've my signature.
What turns you pale ? I do my duty by you
In acting boldly thus on your advice.
D'Ormea [*reading them separately*]. Arrest the people I suspected merely ?
Charles. Did you suspect them ?
D'Ormea. Doubtless : but—but—sir,
This Forquieri 's governor of Turin,
And Rivarol and he have influence over
Half of the capital ! Rabella, too ?
Why, sir—
Charles. Oh, leave the fear to me !
D'Ormea [*still reading*]. You bid me
Incarcerate the people on this list ?
Sir—
Charles. But you never bade arrest those men,
So close related to my father too,
On trifling grounds ?
D'Ormea. Oh, as for that, St. George,
President of Chambery's senators,

Is hatching treason! still—
[*More troubled.*] Sir, Count Cumiane
Is brother to your father's wife! What 's here?
Arrest the wife herself?
Charles. You seem to think
A venial crime this plot against me. Well?
D'Ormea [*who has read the last paper*]. Wherefore am I thus ruined? Why not take
My life at once? This poor formality
Is, let me say, unworthy you! Prevent it
You, madam! I have served you, am prepared
For all disgraces: only, let disgrace
Be plain, be proper—proper for the world
To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me!
Take back your warrant, I will none of it!
Charles. Here is a man to talk of fickleness!
He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood;
I bid him . . .
D'Ormea. Not you! Were he trebly false,
You do not bid me . . .
Charles. Is 't not written there?
I thought so: give—I 'll set it right.
D'Ormea. Is it there?
Oh yes, and plain—arrest him now—drag here
Your father! And were all six times as plain,
Do you suppose I trust it?
Charles. Just one word!
You bring him, taken in the act of flight,
Or else your life is forfeit.
D'Ormea. Ay, to Turin
I bring him, and to-morrow?
Charles. Here and now!
The whole thing is a lie, a hateful lie,
As I believed and as my father said.
I knew it from the first, but was compelled
To circumvent you; and the great D'Ormea,

That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,
The miserable sower of such discord
'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last.
Oh I see! you arrive—this plan of yours,
Weak as it is, torments sufficiently
A sick old peevish man—wrings hasty speech,
An ill-considered threat from him; that 's noted;
Then out you ferret papers, his amusement
In lonely hours of lassitude—examine
The day-by-day report of your paid spies—
And back you come: all was not ripe, you find,
And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet,
But you were in bare time! Only, 't were best
I never saw my father—these old men
Are potent in excuses: and meanwhile,
D'Ormea 's the man I cannot do without!
Polyxena. Charles—
Charles. Ah, no question! You against me too!
You 'd have me eat and drink and sleep, live, die
With this lie coiled about me, choking me!
No, no, D'Ormea! You venture life, you say,
Upon my father's perfidy: and I
Have, on the whole, no right to disregard
The chains of testimony you thus wind
About me; though I do—do from my soul
Discredit them: still I must authorize
These measures, and I will. Perugia!
[*Many* Officers *enter.*] Count—
You and Solar, with all the force you have,
Stand at the Marquis' orders: what he bids,
Implicitly perform! You are to bring
A traitor here; the man that 's likest one
At present, fronts me; you are at his beck
For a full hour! he undertakes to show
A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,
Return with him, and, as my father lives,

He dies this night! The clemency you blame
So oft, shall be revoked—rights exercised,
Too long abjured.
[*To* D'Ormea.] Now sir, about the work!
To save your king and country! Take the warrant!
D'Ormea. You hear the sovereign's mandate, Count Perugia?
Obey me! As your diligence, expect
Reward! All follow to Moncaglier!
Charles [*in great anguish*]. D'Ormea!
[D'Ormea *goes.*
He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!
[*To* Polyxena, *after a pause.*
At least you understand all this?
Polyxena. These means
Of our defence—these measures of precaution?
Charles. It must be the best way; I should have else
Withered beneath his scorn.
Polyxena. What would you say?
Charles. Why, do you think I mean to keep the crown,
Polyxena?
Polyxena. You then believe the story
In spite of all—that Victor comes?
Charles. Believe it?
I know that he is coming—feel the strength
That has upheld me leave me at his coming!
'T was mine, and now he takes his own again.
Some kinds of strength are well enough to have;
But who's to have that strength? Let my crown go!
I meant to keep it; but I cannot—cannot!
Only, he shall not taunt me—he, the first . . .
See if he would not be the first to taunt me
With having left his kingdom at a word.

With letting it be conquered without stroke,
With . . . no—no—'t is no worse than when he left!
I 've just to bid him take it, and, that over,
We 'll fly away—fly, for I loathe this Turin,
This Rivoli, all titles loathe, all state.
We 'd best go to your country—unless God
Send I die now!
Polyxena. Charles, hear me!
Charles. And again
Shall you be my Polyxena—you 'll take me
Out of this woe! Yes, do speak, and keep speaking!
I would not let you speak just now, for fear
You 'd counsel me against him: but talk, now,
As we two used to talk in blessed times:
Bid me endure all his caprices; take me
From this mad post above him!
Polyxena. I believe
We are undone, but from a different cause.
All your resources, down to the least guard,
Are at D'Ormea's beck. What if, the while,
He act in concert with your father? We
Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—
Where find a better place for them?
Charles [*pacing the room*]. And why
Does Victor come? To undo all that 's done,
Restore the past, prevent the future! Seat
His mistress in your seat, and place in mine
. . . Oh, my own people, whom will you find there,
To ask of, to consult with, to care for,
To hold up with your hands? Whom? One that 's false—
False—from the head's crown to the foot's sole, false!

The best is, that I knew it in my heart
From the beginning, and expected this,
And hated you, Polyxena, because
You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro' him,
Saw that he meant this while he crowned me, while
He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed my brow,
I saw——
Polyxena. But if your measures take effect,
D'Ormea true to you?
Charles. Then worst of all!
I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him!
Well may the woman taunt him with his child—
I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,
Seated upon his seat, let slip D'Ormea
To outrage him! We talk—perchance he tears
My father from his bed; the old hands feel
For one who is not, but who should be there,
He finds D'Ormea! D'Ormea too finds him!
The crowded chamber when the lights go out—
Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the dark—
The accursed prompting of the minute! My guards!
To horse—and after, with me—and prevent!
Polyxena [*seizing his hand*]. King Charles! Pause here upon this strip of time
Allotted you out of eternity!
Crowns are from God: you in his name hold yours.
Your life 's no least thing, were it fit your life
Should be abjured along with rule; but now,
Keep both! Your duty is to live and rule—
You, who would vulgarly look fine enough
In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge,—
Ay, you would have men's praise, this Rivoli
Would be illumined! While, as 't is, no doubt,
Something of stain will ever rest on you;

No one will rightly know why you refused
To abdicate; they 'll talk of deeds you could
Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much expect
Future achievement will blot out the past,
Envelope it in haze—nor shall we two
Live happy any more. 'T will be, I feel,
Only in moments that the duty 's seen
As palpably as now: the months, the years
Of painful indistinctness are to come,
While daily must we tread these palace-rooms
Pregnant with memories of the past: your eye
May turn to mine and find no comfort there,
Through fancies that beset me, as yourself,
Of other courses, with far other issues,
We might have taken this great night: such bear,
As I will bear! What matters happiness?
Duty! There 's man's one moment: this is yours!

[*Putting the crown on his head, and the sceptre in his hand, she places him on his seat: a long pause and silence.*

Enter D'Ormea *and* Victor, *with* Guards

Victor. At last I speak; but once—that once, to you!
'T is you I ask, not these your varletry,
Who 's King of us?

Charles [*from his seat*]. Count Tende . . .

Victor. What your spies
Assert I ponder in my soul, I say—
Here to your face, amid your guards! I choose
To take again the crown whose shadow I gave—
For still its potency surrounds the weak
White locks their felon hands have discomposed.
Or I 'll not ask who 's King, but simply, who
Withholds the crown I claim? Deliver it!

I have no friend in the wide world : nor France
Nor England cares for me : you see the sum
Of what I can avail. Deliver it!
Charles. Take it, my father!
And now say in turn,
Was it done well, my father—sure not well,
To try me thus! I might have seen much cause
For keeping it—too easily seen cause!
But, from that moment, e'en more woefully
My life had pined away, than pine it will.
Already you have much to answer for.
My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk eyes
Were happy once! No doubt, my people think
I am their King still . . . but I cannot strive!
Take it!
Victor [*one hand on the crown* CHARLES *offers, the other on his neck*]. So few years give it quietly,
My son! It will drop from me. See you not?
A crown 's unlike a sword to give away—
That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give!
But crowns should slip from palsied brows to heads
Young as this head : yet mine is weak enough,
E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for phrases
To vindicate my right. 'T is of a piece!
All is alike gone by with me—who beat
Once D'Orleans in his lines—his very lines!
To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis's rival,
And now . . .
Charles [*putting the crown on him, to the rest*]. The King speaks, yet none kneels, I think!
Victor. I am then King! As I became a King
Despite the nations, kept myself a King,
So I die King, with Kingship dying too
Around me. I have lasted Europe's time.
What wants my story of completion? Where

Must needs the damning break show? Who
mistrusts
My children here—tell they of any break
'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall?
And who were by me when I died but they?
D'Ormea there!
Charles. What means he?
Victor. Ever there!
Charles—how to save your story! Mine must go.
Say—say that you refused the crown to me!
Charles, yours shall be my story! You immured
Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year
I spend without a sight of you, then die.
That will serve every purpose—tell that tale
The world!
Charles. Mistrust me? Help!
Victor. Past help, past reach!
'T is in the heart—you cannot reach the heart:
This broke mine, that I did believe, you, Charles,
Would have denied me and disgraced me.
Polyxena. Charles
Has never ceased to be your subject, sir!
He reigned at first through setting up yourself
As pattern: if he e'er seemed harsh to you,
'T was from a too intense appreciation
Of your own character: he acted you—
Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,
Nor look for any other than this end.
I hold him worlds the worse on that account;
But so it was.
Charles [*to* POLYXENA]. I love you now indeed.
[*To* VICTOR.] You never knew me.
Victor. Hardly till this moment,
When I seem learning many other things
Because the time for using them is past.
If 't were to do again! That 's idly wished.

Truthfulness might prove policy as good
As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead? Yes:
I 've made it fitter now to be a queen's
Than formerly: I 've ploughed the deep lines there
Which keep too well a crown from slipping off.
No matter. Guile has made me King again.
Louis—'t was in King Victor's time:—long since,
When Louis reigned and, also, Victor reigned.
How the world talks already of us two!
God of eclipse and each discoloured star,
Why do I linger then?
Ha! Where lurks he?
D'Ormea! Nearer to your King! Now stand!
[*Collecting his strength as* D'ORMEA *approaches.*
You lied, D'Ormea! I do not repent. [*Dies.*

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

A TRAGEDY

PERSONS

The Grand-Master's Prefect
The Patriarch's Nuncio
The Republic's Admiral
LOYS DE DREUX, *Knight-Novice*
Initiated Druses—DJABAL, KHALIL, ANAEL, MAANI, KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB, *and others*
Uninitiated Druses
Prefect's Guard. Nuncio's Attendants. Admiral's Force

TIME, 14—

PLACE.—*An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonized by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes*

SCENE.—*A Hall in the Prefect's Palace*

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

1843

ACT I

Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB *and other initiated* Druses, *each as he enters casting off a robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban; then, as giving a loose to exultation,—*

Karshook. The moon is carried off in purple fire:
Day breaks at last! Break glory, with the day,
On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
Now ready to resume its pristine shape
Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,
On red Mokattam's verge—our Founder's flesh,
As he resumes our Founder's function!
Raghib. —Death
Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved
So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea!
Ayoob. Most joy be thine, O Mother-mount! Thy brood
Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,
But thus—but thus! Behind, our Prefect's corse;
Before, a presence like the morning—thine,

Absolute Djabal late,—God Hakeem now
That day breaks!
Karshook. Off then, with disguise at last!
As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,
Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,
Discard each limb the ignoble gesture! Cry,
'T is the Druse Nation, warders on our Mount
Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,
—No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,
No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect, we
Who rise . . .
Ayoob. Who shout . . .
Raghib. Who seize, a first-fruits, ha—
Spoil of the spoiler! Brave!
[*They begin to tear down, and to dispute for, the decorations of the hall.*
Karshook. Hold!
Ayoob. —Mine, I say;
And mine shall it continue!
Karshook. Just this fringe!
Take anything beside! Lo, spire on spire,
Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to the top
O' the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously
Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt
Yon cornice! Where the huge veil, they suspend
Before the Prefect's chamber of delight,
Floats wide, then falls again as if its slave,
The scented air, took heart now, and anon
Lost heart to buoy its breadths of gorgeousness
Above the gloom they droop in—all the porch
Is jewelled o'er with frostwork charactery;
And, see, yon eight-point cross of white flame, winking
Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble stone:
Raze out the Rhodian cross there, so thou leav'st me
This single fringe!

Ayoob. Ha, wouldst thou, dog-fox? Help!
—Three hand-breadths of gold fringe, my son was set
To twist, the night he died!
Karshook. Nay, hear the knave!
And I could witness my one daughter borne,
A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet fold
These arms, be mute, lest word of mine should mar
Our Master's work, delay the Prefect here
A day, prevent his sailing hence for Rhodes—
How know I else?—Hear me denied my right
By such a knave!
Raghib [*interposing*]. Each ravage for himself!
Booty enough! On, Druses! Be there found
Blood and a heap behind us; with us, Djabal
Turned Hakeem; and before us, Lebanon!
Yields the porch? Spare not! There his minions dragged
Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's couch!
Ayoob! Thy son, to soothe the Prefect's pride,
Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on his brow,
Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-work there!
Onward in Djabal's name!

As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL. *A pause and silence*

Khalil. Was it for this,
Djabal hath summoned you? Deserve you thus
A portion in to-day's event? What, here—
When most behoves your feet fall soft, your eyes
Sink low, your tongues lie still,—at Djabal's side,
Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,
Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded shape,—
Dispute you for these gauds?
Ayoob. How say'st thou, Khalil?

Doubtless our Master prompts thee! Take the fringe,
Old Karshook! I supposed it was a day . . .
Khalil. For pillage?
Karshook. Hearken, Khalil! Never spoke
A boy so like a song-bird; we avouch thee
Prettiest of all our Master's instruments
Except thy bright twin-sister; thou and Anael
Challenge his prime regard: but we may crave
(Such nothings as we be) a portion too
Of Djabal's favour; in him we believed,
His bound ourselves, him moon by moon obeyed,
Kept silence till this daybreak—so, may claim
Reward: who grudges me my claim?
Ayoob. To-day
Is not as yesterday!
Raghib. Stand off!
Khalil. Rebel you?
Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw
His wrath on you, the day of our Return?
Other Druses. Wrench from their grasp the fringe! Hounds! must the earth
Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee?—and thee?
Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault!
Khalil. Oh, shame!
Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic tribe
Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore
Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's ridge
Its birthplace, hither! "Let the sea divide
"These hunters from their prey," you said; "and safe
"In this dim islet's virgin solitude
"Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier time
"Fan it to fire; till Hakeem rise again,
"According to his word that, in the flesh
"Which faded on Mokattam ages since,

"He, at our extreme need, would interpose,
"And, reinstating all in power and bliss,
"Lead us himself to Lebanon once more."
Was 't not thus you departed years ago,
Ere I was born?
Druses. 'T was even thus, years ago.
Khalil. And did you call—(according to old laws
Which bid us, lest the sacred grow profane,
Assimilate ourselves in outward rites
With strangers fortune makes our lords, and live
As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,
Druse only with the Druses)—did you call
Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's rage
(Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea
The remnant of our tribe), a race self-vowed
To endless warfare with his hordes and him,
The White-cross Knights of the adjacent Isle?
Karshook. And why else rend we down, wrench up, rase out?
These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited
For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest
Than aught we fled—their Prefect; who began
His promised mere paternal governance
By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs
Able to thwart the Order in its scheme
Of crushing, with our nation's memory,
Each chance of our return, and taming us
Bondslaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he thinks
To end by this day's treason.
Khalil. Say I not?
You, fitted to the Order's purposes,
Your Sheikhs cut off, your rites, your garb proscribed,
Must yet receive one degradation more;
The Knights at last throw off the mask—transfer,
As tributary now and appanage,

This islet they are but protectors of,
To their own ever-craving liege, the Church,
Who licenses all crimes that pay her thus.
You, from their Prefect, were to be consigned
(Pursuant of I know not what vile pact)
To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to outvie
His predecessor in all wickedness.
When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst,
Djabal, the man in semblance, but our God
Confessed by signs and portents. Ye saw fire
Bicker round Djabal, heard strange music flit
Bird-like about his brow?
Druses. We saw—we heard!
Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread,
The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodigies!
Khalil. And as he said has not our Khalif done,
And so disposed events (from land to land
Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,
The pact of villany complete, there comes
This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Master's Prefect
Their treason to consummate,—each will face
For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation:
For simulated Christians, confessed Druses:
And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,
Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice' flag;
That Venice which, the Hospitallers' foe,
Grants us from Candia escort home at price
Of our relinquished isle, Rhodes counts her own—
Venice, whose promised argosies should stand
Toward harbour: is it now that you, and you,
And you, selected from the rest to bear
The burthen of the Khalif's secret, further
To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,
And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate—
That you dare clutch these gauds? Ay, drop them!
Karshook. True,

Most true, all this; and yet, may one dare hint,
Thou art the youngest of us?—though employed
Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,
Transmitter of his mandates, even now.
Much less, whene'er beside him Anael graces
The cedar throne, his queen-bride, art thou like
To occupy its lowest step that day!
Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou aspirest,
Forbidden such or such an honour,—say,
Would silence serve so amply?
Khalil. Karshook thinks
I covet honours? Well, nor idly thinks.
Honours? I have demanded of them all
The greatest.
Karshook. I supposed so.
Khalil. Judge, yourselves!
Turn, thus: 't is in the alcove at the back
Of yonder columned porch, whose entrance now
The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state,
Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from Rhodes,
The other lands from Syria; there they meet.
Now, I have sued with earnest prayers . . .
Karshook. For what
Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue?
Khalil. That mine—
Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs
—Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there!
Djabal reserves that office for himself.
[*A silence.*
Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak
—Scarce more enlightened than yourselves; since, near
As I approach him, nearer as I trust
Soon to approach our Master, he reveals
Only the God's power, not the glory yet.
Therefore I reasoned with you: now, as servant

To Djabal, bearing his authority,
Hear me appoint your several posts! Till noon
None see him save myself and Anael: once
The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off
The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,
The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes
His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from Rhodes!—without a sign
That he suspects aught since he left our Isle;
Nor in his train a single guard beyond
The few he sailed with hence: so have we learned
From Loys.

Karshook. Loys? Is not Loys gone
For ever?

Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight, returned?

The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on the leading prow
Conspicuous in his gay attire, and leapt
Into the surf the foremost. Since day-dawn
I kept watch to the Northward; take but note
Of my poor vigilance to Djabal!

Khalil. Peace!
Thou, Karshook, with thy company, receive
The Prefect as appointed: see, all keep
The wonted show of servitude: announce
His entry here by the accustomed peal
Of trumpets, then await the further pleasure
Of Djabal! (Loys back, whom Djabal sent
To Rhodes that we might spare the single Knight
Worth sparing!)

Enter a second Druse

The Druse. I espied it first! Say, I

First spied the Nuncio's galley from the South!
Said'st thou a Crossed-keys' flag would flap the
mast?
It nears apace! One galley and no more.
If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag,
Forget not, I it was!
Khalil. Thou, Ayoob, bring
The Nuncio and his followers hither! Break
One rule prescribed, ye wither in your blood,
Die at your fault!

Enter a third Druse

The Druse. I shall see home, see home!
—Shall banquet in the sombre groves again!
Hail to thee, Khalil! Venice looms afar;
The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,
Bear up from Candia in the distance!
Khalil. Joy!
Summon our people, Raghib! Bid all forth!
Tell them the long-kept secret, old and young!
Set free the captive, let the trampled raise
Their faces from the dust, because at length
The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's reign
Begins anew! Say, Venice for our guard,
Ere night we steer for Syria! Hear you, Druses?
Hear you this crowning witness to the claims
Of Djabal? Oh, I spoke of hope and fear,
Reward and punishment, because he bade
Who has the right; for me, what should I say
But, mar not those imperial lineaments,
No majesty of all that rapt regard
Vex by the least omission! Let him rise
Without a check from you!
Druses. Let Djabal rise!

Enter LOYS.—*The* Druses *are silent*

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal?—for I seek him, friends!
[*Aside.*] *Tu Dieu!* 'T is as our Isle broke out in song
For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
To-day, and I succeed him in his rule!
But no—they cannot dream of their good fortune!
[*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses! I have tidings for you
But first for Djabal: where 's your tall bewitcher,
With that small Arab thin-lipped silver-mouth?
Khalil [*aside to* KARSHOOK]. Loys, in truth! Yet Djabal cannot err!
Karshook [*to* KHALIL]. And who takes charge of Loys? That 's forgotten,
Despite thy wariness! Will Loys stand
And see his comrades slaughtered?
Loys [*aside*]. How they shrink
And whisper, with those rapid faces! What?
The sight of me in their oppressors' garb
Strikes terror to the simpler tribe? God's shame
On those that bring our Order ill repute!
But all 's at end now; better days begin
For these mild mountaineers from over-sea:
The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
To cower at thus! [*Aloud.*] I asked for Djabal—
Karshook [*aside*]. Better
One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside
The corridor; 't were easy to despatch
A youngster. [*To* LOYS.] Djabal passed some minutes since
Thro' yonder porch, and . . .
Khalil [*aside*]. Hold! What, him despatch?
The only Christian of them all we charge
No tyranny upon? Who,—noblest Knight

Of all that learned from time to time their trade
Of lust and cruelty among us,—heir
To Europe's pomp, a truest child of pride,—
Yet stood between the Prefect and ourselves
From the beginning? Loys, Djabal makes
Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes
For safety? I take charge of him!
[*To* Loys.] Sir Loys,—
Loys. There, cousins! Does Sir Loys strike you dead?
Khalil [*advancing*]. Djabal has intercourse with few or none
Till noontide: but, your pleasure?
Loys. "Intercourse
"With few or none?"—(Ah, Khalil, when you spoke
I saw not your smooth face! All health!—and health
To Anael! How fares Anael?)—"Intercourse
"With few or none?" Forget you, I 've been friendly
With Djabal long ere you or any Druse?
—Enough of him at Rennes, I think, beneath
The Duke my father's roof! He 'd tell by the hour,
With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy brow,
Plausiblest stories . . .
Khalil. Stories, say you?—Ah,
The quaint attire!
Loys. My dress for the last time!
How sad I cannot make you understand,
This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me
Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces
And noblest; and, what 's best and oldest there,
See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which the Nuncio
Tacks to an Hospitaller's vest to-day!
Khalil. The Nuncio we await? What brings you back
From Rhodes, Sir Loys?

Loys. How you island-tribe
Forget the world 's awake while here you drowse!
What brings me back? What should not bring me, rather!
Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day—
Is not my year's probation out? I come
To take the knightly vows.
Khalil. What 's that you wear?
Loys. This Rhodian cross? The cross your Prefect wore.
You should have seen, as I saw, the full Chapter
Rise, to a man, while they transferred this cross
From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . . (fool—
My secret will escape me!) In a word,
My year's probation passed, a Knight ere eve
Am I; bound, like the rest, to yield my wealth
To the common stock, to live in chastity,
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's fame)
—Change this gay weed for the black white-crossed gown,
And fight to death against the Infidel
—Not, therefore, against you, you Christians with
Such partial difference only as befits
The peacefullest of tribes. But Khalil, prithee,
Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day?
Khalil. Ah, the new sword!
Loys. See now! You handle sword
As 't were a camel-staff. Pull! That 's my motto,
Annealed "*Pro fide*," on the blade in blue.
Khalil. No curve in it? Surely a blade should curve.
Loys. Straight from the wrist! Loose—it should poise itself!
Khalil [*waving with irrepressible exultation the sword*]. We are a nation, Loys, of old fame

Among the mountains! Rights have we to keep
With the sword too!
[*Remembering himself.*] But I forget—you bid me
Seek Djabal?
Loys. What! A sword's sight scares you not?
(The People I will make of him and them!
Oh let my Prefect-sway begin at once!)
Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come he must!
Khalil. At noon seek Djabal in the Prefect's
Chamber,
And find . . . [*Aside.*] Nay,'t is thy cursed race's
token,
Frank pride, no special insolence of thine!
[*Aloud.*] Tarry, and I will do your bidding, Loys!
[*To the rest aside.*] Now, forth you! I proceed
to Djabal straight.
Leave this poor boy, who knows not what he says!
Oh will it not add joy to even thy joy,
Djabal, that I report all friends were true?
[KHALIL *goes, followed by the* Druses.
Loys. Tu Dieu! How happy I shall make these
Druses!
Was 't not surpassingly contrived of me
To get the long list of their wrongs by heart,
Then take the first pretence for stealing off
From these poor islanders, present myself
Sudden at Rhodes before the noble Chapter,
And (as best proof of ardour in its cause
Which ere to-night will have become, too, mine)
Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its body,
This Prefect and his villanous career?
The princely Synod! All I dared request
Was his dismissal; and they graciously
Consigned his very office to myself—
Myself may cure the Isle diseased!
And well

For them, they did so! Since I never felt
How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I embrace,
Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine.
To live thus, and thus die! Yet, as I leapt
On shore, so home a feeling greeted me
That I could half believe in Djabal's story,
He used to tempt my father with, at Rennes—
And me, too, since the story brought me here—
Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours
Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,
Left his old name in Lebanon.
Long days
At least to spend in the Isle! and, my news known
An hour hence, what if Anael turn on me
The great black eyes I must forget?
Why, fool,
Recall them, then? My business is with Djabal,
Not Anael! Djabal tarries: if I seek him?—
The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day.

ACT II

Enter DJABAL

Djabal. That a strong man should think himself
a God!
I—Hakeem? To have wandered through the world,
Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now scorn,
now faith,
For my one chant with many a change, my tale
Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance—this
Required, forsooth, no mere man's faculty,
Nought less than Hakeem's? The persuading Loys
To pass probation here; the getting access
By Loys to the Prefect; worst of all,
The gaining my tribe's confidence by fraud
That would disgrace the very Frank,—a few
Of Europe's secrets which subdue the flame,
The wave,—to ply a simple tribe with these,
Took Hakeem?
And I feel this first to-day!
Does the day break, is the hour imminent
When one deed, when my whole life's deed, my
deed
Must be accomplished? Hakeem? Why the God?
Shout, rather, "Djabal, Youssof's child, thought
slain
"With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs, this
Prefect
"Endeavoured to extirpate—saved, a child,
"Returns from traversing the world, a man,
"Able to take revenge, lead back the march

"To Lebanon"—so shout, and who gainsays?
But now, because delusion mixed itself
Insensibly with this career, all 's changed!
Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy?
"True—but my jugglings wrought that!" Put I heart
Into our people where no heart lurked?—"Ah,
"What cannot an impostor do!"
Not this!
Not do this which I do! Not bid avaunt
Falsehood! Thou shalt not keep thy hold on me!
—Nor even get a hold on me! 'T is now—
This day—hour—minute—'t is as here I stand
On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,
That I am found deceiving and deceived!
And now what do I?—hasten to the few
Deceived, ere they deceive the many—shout,
"As I professed, I did believe myself!
"Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery—
"If Ayoob, Karshook saw—Maani there
"Must tell you how I saw my father sink;
"My mother's arms twine still about my neck;
"I hear my brother shriek, here 's yet the scar
"Of what was meant for my own death-blow—say,
"If you had woke like me, grown year by year
"Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,
"Would it be wondrous such delusion grew?
"I walked the world, asked help at every hand;
"Came help or no? Not this and this? Which helps
"When I returned with, found the Prefect here,
"The Druses here, all here but Hakeem's self,
"The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,
"Reserved for such a juncture,—could I call
"My mission aught but Hakeem's? Promised Hakeem

"More than performs the Djabal—you absolve?
"—Me, you will never shame before the crowd
"Yet happily ignorant?—Me, both throngs surround,
"The few deceived, the many unabused,
"—Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and them
"The Prefect, lead to Lebanon? No Khalif,
"But Sheikh once more! Mere Djabal—not" . . .

Enter KHALIL *hastily*

Khalil. —God Hakeem!
'T is told! The whole Druse nation knows thee, Hakeem,
As we! and mothers lift on high their babes
Who seem aware, so glisten their great eyes,
Thou hast not failed us; ancient brows are proud;
Our elders could not earlier die, it seems,
Than at thy coming! The Druse heart is thine!
Take it! my lord and theirs, be thou adored!
Djabal [*aside*]. Adored!—but I renounce it utterly!
Khalil. Already are they instituting choirs
And dances to the Khalif, as of old
'T is chronicled thou bad'st them.
Djabal [*aside*]. I abjure it!
'T is not mine—not for me!
Khalil. Why pour they wine
Flavoured like honey and bruised mountain-herbs,
Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-fruit?
Oh, let me tell thee—Esaad, we supposed
Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
The last sun rise on the Isle: he can see now!
The shamed Druse women never wept before:
They can look up when we reach home, they say.
Smell!—sweet cane, saved in Lilith's breast thus long—

Sweet!—it grows wild in Lebanon. And I
Alone do nothing for thee! 'T is my office
Just to announce what well thou know'st—but thus
Thou bidst me. At this self-same moment tend
The Prefect, Nuncio and the Admiral
Hither by their three sea-paths: nor forget
Who were the trusty watchers!—thou forget?
Like me, who do forget that Anael bade . . .
Djabal [*aside*]. Ay, Anael, Anael—is that said at last?
Louder than all, that would be said, I knew!
What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
To the people? Till that woman crossed my path,
On went I, solely for my people's sake:
I saw her, and I then first saw myself,
And slackened pace: "if I should prove indeed
"Hakeem—with Anael by!"
Khalil [*aside*]. Ah, he is rapt!
Dare I at such a moment break on him
Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes:
The eyes are Djabal's and not Hakeem's yet,
Though but till I have spoken this, perchance.
Djabal [*aside*]. To yearn to tell her, and yet have no one
Great heart's word that will tell her! I could gasp
Doubtless one such word out, and die.
[*Aloud.*] You said
That Anael . . .
Khalil. . . . Fain would see thee, speak with thee,
Before thou change, discard this Djabal's shape
She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is to know.
Something to say that will not from her mind!
I know not what—"Let him but come!" she said.
Djabal [*half-apart*]. My nation—all my Druses—how fare they?

Those I must save, and suffer thus to save,
Hold they their posts? Wait they their Khalif too?
Khalil. All at the signal pant to flock around
That banner of a brow!
Djabal [*aside*]. And when they flock,
Confess them this: and after, for reward,
Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance!
—Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and blind,
Precede me there, forestall my story there,
Tell it in mocks and jeers!
I lose myself.
Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now?
I need the veriest child—why not this child?
[*Turning abruptly to* KHALIL.
You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were nourished
Like Anael with our mysteries: if she
Could vow, so nourished, to love only one
Who should avenge the Druses, whence proceeds
Your silence? Wherefore made you no essay,
Who thus implicitly can execute
My bidding? What have I done, you could not?
Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration
Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life
Of this detested . . .
Does he come, you say,
This Prefect? All 's in readiness?
Khalil. The sword,
The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic tiar,
Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
The Prefect's chamber.
Djabal. —Why did you despair?
Khalil. I know our nation's state? Too surely know,
As thou who speak'st to prove me! Wrongs like ours

Should wake revenge: but when I sought the wronged
And spoke,—"The Prefect stabbed your son—arise!
"Your daughter, while you starve, eats shameless bread
"In his pavilion—then arise!"—my speech
Fell idly: 't was, "Be silent, or worse fare!
"Endure till time's slow cycle prove complete!
"Who mayst thou be that takest on thee to thrust
"Into this peril—art thou Hakeem?" No!
Only a mission like thy mission renders
All these obedient at a breath, subdues
Their private passions, brings their wills to one.
Djabal. You think so?
Khalil. Even now—when they have witnessed
Thy miracles—had I not threatened all
With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar the work,
And couch ere this, each with his special prize,
Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope
To perish. No! When these have kissed thy feet
At Lebanon, the past purged off, the present
Clear,—for the future, even Hakeem's mission
May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
Shall rule them thus renewed.—I tutor thee!
Djabal. And wisely. (He is Anael's brother, pure
As Anael's self.) Go say, I come to her.
Haste! I will follow you. [KHALIL *goes.*
Oh, not confess
To these, the blinded multitude—confess,
Before at least the fortune of my deed
Half-authorize its means! Only to her

Let me confess my fault, who in my path
Curled up like incense from a Mage-king's tomb
When he would have the wayfarer descend
Through the earth's rift and bear hid treasure forth!
How should child's-carelessness prove manhood's crime
Till now that I, whose lone youth hurried past,
Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses' sake,
At length recover in one Druse all joy?
Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still
Would I confess. On the gulf's verge I pause.
How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus?
Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy! [*Goes.*

Enter ANAEL, *and* MAANI, *who is assisting to array her in the ancient dress of the Druses*

Anael. Those saffron vestures of the tabret-girls!
Comes Djabal, think you?
Maani. Doubtless Djabal comes.
Anael. Dost thou snow-swathe thee kinglier, Lebanon,
Than in my dreams?—Nay all the tresses off
My forehead! Look I lovely so? He says
That I am lovely.
Maani. Lovely: nay, that hangs
Awry.
Anael. You tell me how a khandjar hangs?
The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks
The maiden of our class. Are you content
For Djabal as for me?
Maani. Content, my child.
Anael. Oh mother, tell me more of him! He comes
Even now—tell more, fill up my soul with him!

Maani. And did I not . . . yes, surely . . .
tell you all?
Anael. What will be changed in Djabal when
the Change
Arrives? Which feature? Not his eyes!
Maani. 'T is writ
Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the dark
Superbly.
Anael. Not his eyes! His voice perhaps?
Yet that 's no change; for a grave current lived
—Grandly beneath the surface ever lived,
That, scattering, broke as in live silver spray
While . . . ah, the bliss . . . he would discourse
to me
In that enforced still fashion, word on word!
'T is the old current which must swell thro'
that,
For what least tone, Maani, could I lose?
'T is surely not his voice will change!
—If Hakeem
Only stood by! If Djabal, somehow, passed
Out of the radiance as from out a robe;
Possessed, but was not it!
He lived with you?
Well—and that morning Djabal saw me first
And heard me vow never to wed but one
Who saved my People—on that day . . . proceed!
Maani. Once more, then: from the time of his
return
In secret, changed so since he left the Isle
That I, who screened our Emir's last of sons,
This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre
—Who bade him ne'er forget the child he was,
—Who dreamed so long the youth he might be-
come —
I knew not in the man that child; the man

Who spoke alone of hope to save our tribe,
How he had gone from land to land to save
Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to dread.
And much he mused, days, nights, alone he mused:
But never till that day when, pale and worn
As by a persevering woe, he cried
"Is there not one Druse left me?"—and I showed
The way to Khalil's and your hiding-place
From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,
So that he saw you, heard you speak—till then,
Never did he announce—(how the moon seemed
To ope and shut, the while, above us both!)
—His mission was the mission promised us;
The cycle had revolved; all things renewing,
He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to lead
His children home anon, now veiled to work
Great purposes: the Druses now would change!
Anael. And they have changed! And obstacles did sink,
And furtherances rose! And round his form
Played fire, and music beat her angel wings!
My people, let me more rejoice, oh more
For you than for myself! Did I but watch
Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,
One of the throng, how proud were I—tho' ne'er
Singled by Djabal's glance! But to be chosen
His own from all, the most his own of all,
To be exalted with him, side by side,
Lead the exulting Druses, meet . . . ah, how
Worthily meet the maidens who await
Ever beneath the cedars—how deserve
This honour, in their eyes? So bright are they
Who saffron-vested sound the tabret there,
The girls who throng there in my dream! One hour
And all is over: how shall I do aught

That may deserve next hour's exalting?—How?—
[*Suddenly to* MAANI.
Mother, I am not worthy him! I read it
Still in his eyes! He stands as if to tell me
I am not, yet forbears. Why else revert
To one theme ever?—how mere human gifts
Suffice him in myself—whose worship fades,
Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,
As now, who when he comes . . .
[DJABAL *enters.*] Oh why is it
I cannot kneel to you?
Djabal. Rather, 't is I
Should kneel to you, my Anael!
Anael. Even so!
For never seem you—shall I speak the truth?—
Never a God to me! 'T is the Man's hand,
Eye, voice! Oh do you veil these to our people,
Or but to me? To them, I think, to them!
And brightness is their veil, shadow—my truth!
You mean that I should never kneel to you
—So, thus I kneel!
Djabal [*preventing her*]. No—no!
[*Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.*
Ha, have you chosen . . .
Anael. The khandjar with our ancient garb.
But, Djabal,
Change not, be not exalted yet! Give time
That I may plan more, perfect more! My blood
Beats, beats!
[*Aside.*] Oh must I then—since Loys leaves us
Never to come again, renew in me
These doubts so near effaced already—must
I needs confess them now to Djabal?—own
That when I saw that stranger, heard his voice,
My faith fell, and the woeful thought flashed first
That each effect of Djabal's presence, taken

For proof of more than human attributes
In him, by me whose heart at his approach
Beat fast, whose brain while he was by swam round,
Whose soul at his departure died away,
—That every such effect might have been wrought
In other frames, tho' not in mine, by Loys
Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt
Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?
How shall I meet the rapture presently,
With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?
Djabal [*aside*]. Avow the truth? I cannot! In what words
Avow that all she loved in me was false?
—Which yet has served that flower-like love of hers
To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and clasp
With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom.
Could I take down the prop-work, in itself
So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid
With painted cups and fruitage—might these still
Bask in the sun, unconscious their own strength
Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced
The old support thus silently withdrawn!
But no; the beauteous fabric crushes too.
'T is not for my sake but for Anael's sake
I leave her soul this Hakeem where it leans.
Oh could I vanish from her, quit the Isle!
And yet—a thought comes: here my work is done
At every point; the Druses must return—
Have convoy to their birth-place back, whoe'er
The leader be, myself or any Druse—
Venice is pledged to that: 't is for myself,
For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,
I stay now, not for them: to slay or spare
The Prefect, whom imports it save myself?
He cannot bar their passage from the Isle;
What would his death be but my own reward?

Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone!
Let him escape with all my House's blood!
Ere he can reach land, Djabal disappears,
And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh as first,
Live in her memory, keeping her sublime
Above the world. She cannot touch that world
By ever knowing what I truly am,
Since Loys,—of mankind the only one
Able to link my present with my past,
My life in Europe with my Island life,
Thence, able to unmask me,—I 've disposed
Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter KHALIL

Khalil. Loys greets thee!
Djabal. Loys? To drag me back? It cannot be!
Anael [*aside*]. Loys! Ah, doubt may not be stifled so!
Khalil. Can I have erred that thou so gazest? Yes,
I told thee not in the glad press of tidings
Of higher import, Loys is returned
Before the Prefect, with, if possible,
Twice the light-heartedness of old. As though
On some inauguration he expects,
To-day, the world's fate hung!
Djabal. —And asks for me?
Khalil. Thou knowest all things. Thee in chief he greets,
But every Druse of us is to be happy
At his arrival, he declares: were Loys
Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul
To take us in with. How I love that Loys!
Djabal [*aside*]. Shame winds me with her tether round and round.

Anael [*aside*]. Loys? I take the trial! it is meet,
The little I can do, be done; that faith,
All I can offer, want no perfecting
Which my own act may compass. Ay, this way
All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
Be chased by other aid than mine. Advance
Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,
The mortal with the more than mortal gifts!
Djabal [*aside*]. Before, there were so few deceived! and now
There 's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle
But, having learned my superhuman claims,
And calling me his Khalif-God, will clash
The whole truth out from Loys at first word!
While Loys, for his part, will hold me up,
With a Frank's unimaginable scorn
Of such imposture, to my people's eyes!
Could I but keep him longer yet awhile
From them, amuse him here until I plan
How he and I at once may leave the Isle!
Khalil I cannot part with from my side—
My only help in this emergency:
There 's Anael!
Anael. Please you?
Djabal. Anael—none but she!
[*To* ANAEL.] I pass some minutes in the chamber there,
Ere I see Loys: you shall speak with him
Until I join you. Khalil follows me.
Anael [*aside*]. As I divined: he bids me save myself,
Offers me a probation—I accept.
Let me see Loys!
Loys [*without*]. Djabal!
Anael [*aside*]. 'T is his voice.
The smooth Frank trifler with our people's wrongs,

The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud
On this and that inflicted tyranny,
—Aught serving to parade an ignorance
Of how wrong feels, inflicted! Let me close
With what I viewed at distance: let myself
Probe this delusion to the core!
Djabal. He comes.
Khalil, along with me! while Anael waits
Till I return once more—and but once more.

ACT III

ANAEL *and* LOYS

Anael. Here leave me! Here I wait another.
'T was
For no mad protestation of a love
Like this you say possesses you, I came.
Loys. Love? how protest a love I dare not feel?
Mad words may doubtless have escaped me: you
Are here—I only feel you here!
Anael. No more!
Loys. But once again, whom could you love?
I dare,
Alas, say nothing of myself, who am
A Knight now, for when Knighthood we embrace,
Love we abjure: so, speak on safely: speak,
Lest I speak, and betray my faith! And yet
To say your breathing passes through me, changes
My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you,
As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it—
This is not to protest my love! You said
You could love one . . .
Anael. One only! We are bent
To earth—who raises up my tribe, I love;
The Prefect bows us—who removes him; we
Have ancient rights—who gives them back to us,
I love. Forbear me! Let my hand go!
Loys. Him
You could love only? Where is Djabal? Stay!

[*Aside.*] Yet wherefore stay? Who does this but
myself?
Had I apprised her that I come to do
Just this, what more could she acknowledge? No,
She sees into my heart's core! What is it
Feeds either cheek with red, as June some rose?
Why turns she from me? Ah fool, over-fond
To dream I could call up . . .
. . . What never dream
Yet feigned! 'T is love! Oh Anael, speak to me!
Djabal—
Anael. Seek Djabal by the Prefect's chamber
At noon! [*She paces the room.*
Loys [*aside*]. And am I not the Prefect now?
Is it my fate to be the only one
Able to win her love, the only one
Unable to accept her love? The past
Breaks up beneath my footing: came I here
This morn as to a slave, to set her free
And take her thanks, and then spend day by day
Content beside her in the Isle? What works
This knowledge in me now? Her eye has broken
The faint disguise away: for Anael's sake
I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause
Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,
To live without!
—As I must live! To-day
Ordains me Knight, forbids me . . . never shall
Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm,
Thy soldier!
Anael. Djabal you demanded, comes.
Loys [*aside*]. What wouldst thou, Loys? See
him? Nought beside
Is wanting: I have felt his voice a spell
From first to last. He brought me here, made
known

The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek
Redress for them ; and shall I meet him now,
When nought is wanting but a word of his,
To—what ?—induce me to spurn hope, faith, pride,
Honour away,—to cast my lot among
His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,
Breaking my high pact of companionship
With those who graciously bestowed on me
The very opportunities I turn
Against them ! Let me not see Djabal now !
Anael. The Prefect also comes.
Loys [*aside*]. Him let me see,
Not Djabal ! Him, degraded at a word,
To soothe me,—to attest belief in me—
And after, Djabal ! Yes, ere I return
To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed
This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will
For ever.
Anael, not before the vows
Irrevocably fix me . . .
Let me fly !
The Prefect, or I lose myself for ever ! [*Goes.*
Anael. Yes, I am calm now ; just one way remains—
One, to attest my faith in him : for, see,
I were quite lost else : Loys, Djabal, stand
On either side—two men ! I balance looks
And words, give Djabal a man's preference,
No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed !
And for a love like this, the God who saves
My race, selects me for his bride ? One way !

Enter DJABAL

Djabal [*to himself*]. No moment is to waste then ; 't is resolved.
If Khalil may be trusted to lead back

My Druses, and if Loys can be lured
Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence,
Or promise never to return at least,—
All 's over. Even now my bark awaits:
I reach the next wild islet and the next,
And lose myself beneath the sun for ever.
And now, to Anael!

Anael. Djabal, I am thine!

Djabal. Mine? Djabal's?—As if Hakeem had not been?

Anael. Not Djabal's? Say first, do you read my thought?
Why need I speak, if you can read my thought?

Djabal. I do not, I have said a thousand times.

Anael. (My secret 's safe, I shall surprise him yet!)
Djabal, I knew your secret from the first:
Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch
You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,
And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see!)
. . . I knew you were not human, for I said
"This dim secluded house where the sea beats
"Is heaven to me—my people's huts are hell
"To them; this august form will follow me,
"Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have him;
"And they, the Prefect! Oh, my happiness
"Rounds to the full whether I choose or no!
"His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,
"His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say
"He let me love him: in that moment's bliss
"I shall forget my people pine for home—
"They pass and they repass with pallid eyes!"
I vowed at once a certain vow; this vow—
Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.
Embrace me!

Djabal [*apart*]. And she loved me! Nought remained
But that! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead?
Anael. Ah, you reproach me! True, his death crowns all,
I know—or should know: and I would do much,
Believe! but, death! Oh, you, who have known death,
Would never doom the Prefect, were death fearful
As we report!
Death!—a fire curls within us
From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,
Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell
Of flesh, perchance!
Death!—witness, I would die,
Whate'er death be, would venture now to die
For Khalil, for Maani—what for thee?
Nay but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance
My vow will not be broken, for I must
Do something to attest my faith in you,
Be worthy you!
Djabal [*avoiding her*]. I come for that—to say
Such an occasion is at hand: 't is like
I leave you—that we part, my Anael,—part
For ever!
Anael. We part? Just so! I have succumbed,—
I am, he thinks, unworthy—and nought less
Will serve than such approval of my faith.
Then, we part not! Remains there no way short
Of that? Oh not that!
Death!—yet a hurt bird
Died in my hands; its eyes filmed—"Nay, it sleeps,"
I said, "will wake to-morrow well": 't was dead.
Djabal. I stand here and time fleets. Anael—I come

To bid a last farewell to you : perhaps
We never meet again. But, ere the Prefect
Arrive . . .

Enter KHALIL, *breathlessly*

Khalil. He 's here! The Prefect! Twenty guards,
No more : no sign he dreams of danger. All
Awaits thee only. Ayoob, Karshook, keep
Their posts—wait but the deed's accomplishment
To join us with thy Druses to a man.
Still holds his course the Nuncio—near and near
The fleet from Candia steering.
Djabal [*aside*]. All is lost !
—Or won ?
Khalil. And I have laid the sacred robe,
The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch—the place
Commanded. Thou wilt hear the Prefect's trumpet.
Djabal. Then I keep Anael,—him then, past recall,
I slay—'t is forced on me. As I began
I must conclude—so be it !
Khalil. For the rest,
Save Loys, our foe's solitary sword,
All is so safe that . . . I will ne'er entreat
Thy post again of thee : tho' danger none,
There must be glory only meet for thee
In slaying the Prefect.
Anael [*aside*]. And 't is now that Djabal
Would leave me !—in the glory meet for him !
Djabal. As glory, I would yield the deed to you
Or any Druse ; what peril there may be,
I keep. [*Aside.*] All things conspire to hound me on.
Not now, my soul, draw back, at least! Not now!
The course is plain, howe'er obscure all else.
Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,

Prevent what else will be irreparable,
Secure these transcendental helps, regain
The Cedars—then let all dark clear itself!
I slay him!
Khalil. Anael, and no part for us!
[*To* DJABAL.] Hast thou possessed her with . . .
Djabal [*to* ANAEL]. Whom speak you to?
What is it you behold there? Nay, this smile
Turns stranger. Shudder you? The man must die,
As thousands of our race have died thro' him.
One blow, and I discharge his weary soul
From the flesh that pollutes it! Let him fill
Straight some new expiatory form, of earth
Or sea, the reptile or some aëry thing:
What is there in his death?
Anael. My brother said,
Is there no part in it for us?
Djabal. For Khalil,—
The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry;
Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
In the Pavilion to receive him—here
I slay the Prefect; meanwhile Ayoob leads
The Nuncio with his guards within: once these
Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bar
Entry or egress till I give the sign
Which waits the landing of the argosies
You will announce to me: this double sign
That justice is performed and help arrived,
When Ayoob shall receive, but not before,
Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit
The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere
We leave for ever this detested spot.
Go, Khalil, hurry all! No pause, no pause!
Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!
Khalil. What sign? and who the bearer?
Djabal. Who shall show

My ring, admit to Ayoob. How she stands!
Have I not . . . I must have some task for her.
Anael, not that way! 'T is the Prefect's chamber!
Anael, keep you the ring—give you the sign!
(It holds her safe amid the stir.) You will
Be faithful?
Anael [*taking the ring*]. I would fain be worthy.
Hark! [*Trumpet without.*
Khalil. He comes.
Djabal. And I too come.
Anael. One word, but one!
Say, shall you be exalted at the deed?
Then? On the instant?
Djabal. I exalted? What?
He, there—we, thus—our wrongs revenged, our tribe
Set free? Oh, then shall I, assure yourself,
Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death
Exalted!
Khalil. He is here.
Djabal. Away—away! [*They go.*

Enter the PREFECT *with* Guards, *and* LOYS

The Prefect [*to* Guards]. Back, I say, to the galley every guard!
That 's my sole care now; see each bench retains
Its complement of rowers; I embark
O' the instant, since this Knight will have it so.
Alas me! Could you have the heart, my Loys!
[*To a* Guard *who whispers.*] Oh, bring the holy Nuncio here forthwith! [*The* Guards *go.*
Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see
The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,
With tears i' the eye! So, you are Prefect now?
You depose me—you succeed me? Ha, ha!

Loys. And dare you laugh, whom laughter less becomes
Than yesterday's forced meekness we beheld . . .
Prefect. —When you so eloquently pleaded, Loys,
For my dismissal from the post? Ah, meek
With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else!
And wish him the like meekness: for so staunch
A servant of the Church can scarce have bought
His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard pieces!
You 've my successor to condole with, Nuncio!
I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys!
Loys. You make as you would tell me you rejoice
To leave your scene of . . .
Prefect. Trade in the dear Druses?
Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what yesterday
We heard enough of! Drove I in the Isle
A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,
Which you 'll need shortly! Did it never breed
Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
When I, the insatiate . . . and so forth—was bent
On having a partaker in my rule?
Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,
If not that I might also shift—what on him?
Half of the peril, Loys!
Loys. Peril?
Prefect. Hark you!
I 'd love you if you 'd let me—this for reason,
You save my life at price of . . . well, say risk
At least, of yours. I came a long time since
To the Isle; our Hospitallers bade me tame
These savage wizards, and reward myself—
Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your crime?
Prefect. Loys, the Knights! we doubtless understood
Each other; as for trusting to reward

From any friend beside myself . . . no, no!
I clutched mine on the spot, when it was sweet,
And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards
Alive—was sure they were not on me, only
When I was on them: but with age comes caution:
And stinging pleasures please less and sting more.
Year by year, fear by fear! The girls were brighter
Than ever ('faith, there 's yet one Anael left,
I set my heart upon—Oh, prithee, let
That brave new sword lie still!)—These joys looked brighter,
But silenter the town, too, as I passed.
With this alcove's delicious memories
Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine, the oar,
Stealing to catch me. Brief, when I began
To quake with fear—(I think I hear the Chapter
Solicited to let me leave, now all
Worth staying for was gained and gone!)—I say,
Just when, for the remainder of my life,
All methods of escape seemed lost—that then
Up should a young hot-headed Loys spring,
Talk very long and loud,—in fine, compel
The Knights to break their whole arrangement, have me
Home for pure shame—from this safehold of mine
Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,
To my wild place of banishment, San Gines
By Murcia, where my three fat manors lying,
Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,
Are all I have to guard me,—that such fortune
Should fall to me, I hardly could expect.
Therefore I say, I 'd love you.

Loys. Can it be?
I play into your hands then? Oh no, no!
The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order

Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the pit?
But I will back—will yet unveil you!
Prefect. Me?
To whom?—perhaps Sir Galeas, who in Chapter
Shook his white head thrice—and some dozen times
My hand next morning shook, for value paid!
To that Italian saint, Sir Cosimo?—
Indignant at my wringing year by year
A thousand bezants from the coral-divers,
As you recounted; felt the saint aggrieved?
Well might he—I allowed for his half-share
Merely one hundred. To Sir . . .
Loys. See! you dare
Inculpate the whole Order; yet should I,
A youth, a sole voice, have the power to change
Their evil way, had they been firm in it?
Answer me!
Prefect. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,
And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too,
And the young arm, we 'll even say, my Loys,
—The fear of losing or diverting these
Into another channel, by gainsaying
A novice too abruptly, could not influence
The Order! You might join, for aught they cared,
Their red-cross rivals of the Temple! Well,
I thank you for my part, at all events.
Stay here till they withdraw you! You 'll inhabit
My palace—sleep, perchance, in the alcove
Whither I go to meet our holy friend.
Good! and now disbelieve me if you can,—
This is the first time for long years I enter
Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just as if I lifted
The lid up of my tomb.
Loys. They share his crime!
God's punishment will overtake you yet.

Prefect. Thank you it does not! Pardon this
last flash:
I bear a sober visage presently
With the disinterested Nuncio here—
His purchase-money safe at Murcia, too!
Let me repeat—for the first time, no draught
Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.
When we next meet, this folly may have passed,
We 'll hope. Ha, ha! [*Goes through the arras.*
Loys. Assure me but . . . he 's gone!
He could not lie. Then what have I escaped,
I, who had so nigh given up happiness
For ever, to be linked with him and them!
Oh, opportunest of discoveries! I
Their Knight? I utterly renounce them all!
Hark! What, he meets by this the Nuncio? Yes,
The same hyæna groan-like laughter! Quick—
To Djabal! I am one of them at last,
These simple-hearted Druses—Anael's tribe!
Djabal! She 's mine at last. Djabal, I say!
[*Goes.*

ACT IV

Enter DJABAL

Djabal. Let me but slay the Prefect. The end now!
To-morrow will be time enough to pry
Into the means I took: suffice, they served,
Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge
True to its object. [*Seeing the robe, etc. disposed.*
Mine should never so
Have hurried to accomplishment! Thee, Djabal,
Far other mood befitted! Calm the Robe
Should clothe this doom's awarder!
[*Taking the robe.*] Shall I dare
Assume my nation's Robe? I am at least
A Druse again, chill Europe's policy
Drops from me: I dare take the Robe. Why not
The Tiar? I rule the Druses, and what more
Betokens it than rule?—yet—yet—
[*Lays down the tiar.*
[*Footsteps in the alcove.*] He comes!
[*Taking the sword.*
If the Sword serve, let the Tiar lie! So, feet
Clogged with the blood of twenty years can fall
Thus lightly! Round me, all ye ghosts! He 'll lift . . .
Which arm to push the arras wide?—or both?
Stab from the neck down to the heart—there stay!
Near he comes—nearer—the next footstep! Now!
[*As he dashes aside the arras,* ANAEL *is discovered.*

Ha! Anael! Nay, my Anael, can it be?
Heard you the trumpet? I must slay him here,
And here you ruin all. Why speak you not?
Anael, the Prefect comes! [ANAEL *screams.*] So slow to feel
'T is not a sight for you to look upon?
A moment's work—but such work! Till you go,
I must be idle—idle, I risk all!
[*Pointing to her hair.*
Those locks are well, and you are beauteous thus,
But with the dagger 't is, I have to do!
Anael. With mine!
Djabal. Blood—Anael?
Anael. Djabal, 't is thy deed!
It must be! I had hoped to claim it mine—
Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess
'T was not I, but thyself . . . not I have . . . Djabal!
Speak to me!
Djabal. Oh, my punishment!
Anael. Speak to me
While I can speak! touch me, despite the blood!
When the command passed from thy soul to mine,
I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,
And the approaching exaltation,—"make
"One sacrifice!" I said,—and he sat there,
Bade me approach; and, as I did approach,
Thy fire with music burst into my brain.
'T was but a moment's work, thou saidst—perchance
It may have been so! Well, it is thy deed.
Djabal. It is my deed.
Anael. His blood all this!—this! and . . .
And more! Sustain me, Djabal! Wait not—now
Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and me!

It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us!
At least confirm me! Djabal, blood gushed forth—
He was our tyrant—but I looked he 'd fall
Prone as asleep—why else is death called sleep?
Sleep? He bent o'er his breast! 'T is sin, I know,—
Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him?
Be it thou that punishest, not he—who creeps
On his red breast—is here! 'T is the small groan
Of a child—no worse! Bestow the new life, then!
Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing!
[*Following him as he retreats.*
Now! Change us both! Change me and change thou!
Djabal [*sinks on his knees*]. Thus!
Behold my change! You have done nobly. I!—
Anael. Can Hakeem kneel?
Djabal. No Hakeem, and scarce Djabal!
I have dealt falsely, and this woe is come.
No—hear me ere scorn blast me! Once and ever,
The deed is mine. Oh think upon the past!
Anael [*to herself*]. Did I strike once, or twice, or many times?
Djabal. I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in glooms,
Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep:
Anael, I saw my tribe: I said, "Without
"A miracle this cannot be"—I said
"Be there a miracle!"—for I saw you.
Anael. His head lies south the portal.
Djabal. —Weighed with this
The general good, how could I choose my own?
What matter was my purity of soul?
Little by little I engaged myself—
Heaven would accept me for its instrument,
I hoped: I said Heaven had accepted me.

Anael. Is it this blood breeds dreams in me? Who said
You were not Hakeem? And your miracles—
The fire that plays innocuous round your form?
[*Again changing her whole manner.*
Ah, thou wouldst try me—thou art Hakeem still!
Djabal. Woe—woe! As if the Druses of the Mount
(Scarce Arabs, even there, but here, in the Isle,
Beneath their former selves) should comprehend
The subtle lore of Europe! A few secrets
That would not easily affect the meanest
Of the crowd there, could wholly subjugate
The best of our poor tribe. Again that eye?
Anael [*after a pause springs to his neck*]. Djabal, in this there can be no deceit!
Why, Djabal, were you human only,—think,
Maani is but human, Khalil human,
Loys is human even—did their words
Haunt me, their looks pursue me? Shame on you
So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me
So to need trying! Could I, with the Prefect
And the blood, there—could I see only you?
—Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood?
Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?
[*As* DJABAL *slowly unclasps her arms, and puts her silently from him.*
Hakeem would save me. Thou art Djabal. Crouch!
Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!
The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud—
Full, midway, of our fathers' trophied tombs,
Based on the living rock, devoured not by
The unstable desert's jaws of sand,—falls prone.

Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there
A ruin, obscene creatures will moan through.
—Let us come, Djabal!
Djabal. Whither come?
Anael. At once—
Lest so it grow intolerable. Come!
Will I not share it with thee? Best at once!
So, feel less pain! Let them deride,—thy tribe
Now trusting in thee,—Loys shall deride!
Come to them, hand in hand, with me!
Djabal. Where come?
Anael. Where?—to the Druses thou hast wronged! Confess,
Now that the end is gained—(I love thee now—)
That thou hast so deceived them—(perchance love thee
Better than ever.) Come, receive their doom
Of infamy! O, best of all I love thee!
Shame with the man, no triumph with the God,
Be mine! Come!
Djabal. Never! More shame yet? and why?
Why? You have called this deed mine—it is mine!
And with it I accept its circumstance.
How can I longer strive with fate? The past
Is past: my false life shall henceforth show true.
Hear me! The argosies touch land by this;
They bear us to fresh scenes and happier skies.
What if we reign together?—if we keep
Our secret for the Druses' good?—by means
Of even their superstition, plant in them
New life? I learn from Europe: all who seek
Man's good must awe man, by such means as these.
We two will be divine to them—we are!
All great works in this world spring from the ruins
Of greater projects—ever, on our earth,
Babels men block out, Babylons they build.

I wrest the weapon from your hand! I claim
The deed! Retire! You have my ring—you bar
All access to the Nuncio till the forces
From Venice land.
Anael. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then?
Djabal [*putting the Tiara of Hakeem on his head*].
And from this moment that I dare ope wide
Eyes that till now refused to see, begins
My true dominion: for I know myself,
And what I am to personate. No word?
[ANAEL *goes.*
'T is come on me at last! His blood on her——
What memories will follow that! Her eye,
Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed black brow!
Ah, fool! Has Europe then so poorly tamed
The Syrian blood from out thee? Thou, presume
To work in this foul earth by means not foul?
Scheme, as for heaven,—but, on the earth, be glad
If a least ray like heaven's be left thee!
Thus
I shall be calm—in readiness—no way
Surprised. [*A noise without.*
This should be Khalil and my Druses.
Venice is come then! Thus I grasp thee, sword!
Druses, 't is Hakeem saves you! In! Behold
Your Prefect!

Enter LOYS. DJABAL *hides the khandjar in his robe*

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal!—but no time for words.
You know who waits there?
[*Pointing to the alcove.*
Well!—and that 't is there
He meets the Nuncio? Well? Now, a surprise—
He there—
Djabal. I know—

Loys. ——is now no mortal's lord,
Is absolutely powerless—call him, dead—
He is no longer Prefect—you are Prefect!
Oh, shrink not! I do nothing in the dark,
Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe!
I understood at once your urgency
That I should leave this isle for Rhodes; I felt
What you were loath to speak—your need of help.
I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness
Imposed on me: have, face to face, confronted
The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on him
The enormities of his long rule; he stood
Mute, offered no defence, no crime denied.
On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,
Your faith so like our own, and all you urged
Of old to me: I spoke, too, of your goodness,
Your patience—brief, I hold henceforth the Isle
In charge, am nominally lord,—but you,
You are associated in my rule—
Are the true Prefect! Ay, such faith had they
In my assurance of your loyalty
(For who insults an imbecile old man?)
That we assume the Prefecture this hour.
You gaze at me? Hear greater wonders yet—
I cast down all the fabric I have built.
These Knights, I was prepared to worship . . . .
but
Of that another time; what 's now to say,
Is—I shall never be a Knight! Oh, Djabal,
Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
And call you brother! I am Druse like you:
My wealth, my friends, my power, are wholly
yours,
Your people's, which is now my people: for
There is a maiden of your tribe, I love—
She loves me—Khalil's sister——

Djabal. Anael?
Loys. Start you?
Seems what I say, unknightly? Thus it chanced:
When first I came, a novice, to the isle . . .

Enter one of the NUNCIO'S Guards *from the alcove*

Guard. Oh horrible! Sir Loys! Here is Loys!
And here— [*Others enter from the alcove.*
[*Pointing to* DJABAL.] Secure him, bind him—this is he! [*They surround* DJABAL.
Loys. Madmen—what is 't you do? Stand from my friend,
And tell me!
Guard. Thou canst have no part in this—
Surely no part! But slay him not! The Nuncio
Commanded, slay him not!
Loys. Speak, or . . .
Guard. The Prefect
Lies murdered there by him thou dost embrace.
Loys. By Djabal? Miserable fools! How Djabal?
[*A* Guard *lifts* DJABAL'S *robe;* DJABAL *flings down the khandjar.*
Loys [*after a pause*]. Thou hast received some insult worse than all,
Some outrage not to be endured—
[*To the* Guards.] Stand back!
He is my friend—more than my friend. Thou hast
Slain him upon that provocation.
Guard. No!
No provocation! 'T is a long devised
Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved.
He is their Khalif—'t is on that pretence—
Their mighty Khalif who died long ago,
And now comes back to life and light again!
All is just now revealed, I know not how,

By one of his confederates—who, struck
With horror at this murder, first apprised
The Nuncio. As 't was said, we find this Djabal
Here where we take him.
Djabal [*aside*]. Who broke faith with me?
Loys [*to* DJABAL]. Hear'st thou? Speak! Till
thou speak, I keep off these,
Or die with thee. Deny this story! Thou
A Khalif, an impostor? Thou, my friend,
Whose tale was of an inoffensive tribe,
With . . . but thou know'st—on that tale's truth
I pledged
My faith before the Chapter: what art thou?
Djabal. Loys, I am as thou hast heard. All 's
true.
No more concealment! As these tell thee, all
Was long since planned. Our Druses are enough
To crush this handful: the Venetians land
Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part.
Thou, serving much, wouldst fain have served me
more;
It might not be. I thank thee. As thou hearest,
We are a separated tribe: farewell!
Loys. Oh where will truth be found now?
Canst thou so
Belie the Druses? Do they share thy crime?
Those thou professest of our Breton stock,
Are partners with thee? Why, I saw but now
Khalil, my friend: he spoke with me—no word
Of this! and Anael—whom I love, and who
Loves me—she spoke no word of this.
Djabal. Poor boy!
Anael, who loves thee? Khalil, fast thy friend?
We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dreux?
No: older than the oldest, princelier
Than Europe's princeliest race, our tribe: enough

For thine, that on our simple faith we found
A monarchy to shame your monarchies
At their own trick and secret of success.
The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon
The palace-step of him whose life ere night
Is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet
Shall laugh there! What, we Druses wait forsooth
The kind interposition of a boy
—Can only save ourselves if thou concede :
—Khalil admire thee? He is my right-hand,
My delegate!—Anael accept thy love?
She is my bride!
Loys. Thy bride? She one of them?
Djabal. My bride!
Loys. And she retains her glorious eyes!
She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt!
Ah—who but she directed me to find
Djabal within the Prefect's chamber? Khalil
Bade me seek Djabal there, too. All is truth.
What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this?
Did the Church ill to institute long since
Perpetual warfare with such serpentry?
And I—have I desired to shift my part,
Evade my share in her design? 'T is well.
Djabal. Loys, I wronged thee—but unwittingly:
I never thought there was in thee a virtue
That could attach itself to what thou deemest
A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys,
But that is over : all is over now,
Save the protection I ensure against
My people's anger. By their Khalif's side,
Thou art secure and mayst depart : so, come!
Loys. Thy side? I take protection at thy hand?

Enter other Guards

Guards. Fly with him! Fly, Sir Loys! 'T is too true:
And only by his side thou mayst escape.
The whole tribe is in full revolt: they flock
About the palace—will be here—on thee—
And there are twenty of us, we the Guards
O' the Nuncio, to withstand them! Even we
Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,
But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,
Made known the horror to the Nuncio. Fly!
The Nuncio stands aghast. At least let us
Escape thy wrath, O Hakeem! We are nought
In thy tribe's persecution! [*To* Loys.] Keep by him!
They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince returned:
He is their God, they shout, and at his beck
Are life and death!

Loys [*springing at the khandjar* DJABAL *had thrown down, seizes him by the throat*].

Thus by his side am I!
Thus I resume my knighthood and its warfare,
Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of place!
Thus art thou caught. Without, thy dupes may cluster:
Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—thou art Hakeem,
How say they?—God art thou! but also here
Is the least, youngest, meanest the Church calls
Her servant, and his single arm avails
To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou
Art crushed. Hordes of thy Druses flock without:
Here thou hast me, who represent the Cross,

Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Mahound and thee.
Die! [DJABAL *remains calm.*] Implore my mercy, Hakeem, that my scorn
May help me! Nay, I cannot ply thy trade;
I am no Druse, no stabber: and thine eye,
Thy form, are too much as they were—my friend
Had such. Speak! Beg for mercy at my foot!
[DJABAL *still silent.*
Heaven could not ask so much of me—not, sure,
So much. I cannot kill him so.
[*After a pause.*] Thou art
Strong in thy cause, then—dost outbrave us, then.
Heardst thou that one of thine accomplices,
Thy very people, has accused thee? Meet
His charge! Thou hast not even slain the Prefect
As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet that Druse!
Come with me and disprove him—be thou tried
By him, nor seek appeal! Promise me this,
Or I will do God's office. What, shalt thou
Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet truth
Want even an executioner? Consent,
Or I will strike—look in my face—I will!
Djabal. Give me again my khandjar, if thou darest! [LOYS *gives it.*
Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge
This home. A Druse betray me? Let us go!
[*Aside.*] Who has betrayed me? [*Shouts without.*
Hearest thou? I hear
No plainer than long years ago I heard
That shout—but in no dream now. They return!
Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys? Well.

ACT V

The Uninitiated Druses, *filling the hall tumultuously, and speaking together*

Here flock we, obeying the summons. Lo,
Hakeem hath appeared, and the Prefect is dead,
and we return to Lebanon! My manufacture of
goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there.
Come, old Nasif—link thine arm in mine—we
fight, if needs be. Come, what is a great fight-word?
—"Lebanon?" (My daughter—my daughter!)
—But is Khalil to have the office of Hamza?—
Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of henna
and cloves. Where is Hakeem?—The only prophet
I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth:
a little black Copht, dressed all in black too, with
a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind
him like the back-fin of a water-serpent. Is this
he? Biamrallah! Biamreh! HAKEEM!

Enter the NUNCIO, *with* Guards

Nuncio [*to his* Attendants]. Hold both, the sorcerer and this accomplice
Ye talk of, that accuseth him! And tell
Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope:
Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed!
Lo, this black disemboguing of the Isle!
[*To the* Druses.] Ah children, what a sight for these old eyes
That kept themselves alive this voyage through

To smile their very last on you! I came
To gather one and all you wandering sheep
Into my fold, as though a father came . . .
As though, in coming, a father should . . .
[*To his* Guards.] (Ten, twelve
—Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet? None?
The wizards stop each avenue? Keep close!)
[*To the* Druses.] As if one came to a son's house, I say,
So did I come—no guard with me—to find . . .
Alas—alas!
A Druse. Who is the old man?
Another. Oh, ye are to shout!
Children, he styles you.
Druses. Ay, the Prefect 's slain!
Glory to the Khalif, our Father!
Nuncio. Even so
I find, (ye prompt aright) your father slain.
While most he plotted for your good, that father
(Alas, how kind, ye never knew)—lies slain.
[*Aside.*] (And hell's worm gnaw the glozing knave —with me,
For being duped by his cajoleries!
Are these the Christians? These the docile crew
My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er?)
[*To his* Attendants, *who whisper.*] What say ye does this wizard style himself?
Hakeem? Biamrallah? The third Fatemite?
What is this jargon? He—the insane Khalif,
Dead near three hundred years ago, come back
In flesh and blood again?
Druses. He mutters! Hear ye?
He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old man
Is our dead Prefect's friend. Tear him!
Nuncio. Ye dare not.
I stand here with my five-and-seventy years,

The Patriarch's power behind me, God's above.
Those years have witnessed sin enough ; ere now
Misguided men arose against their lords,
And found excuse ; but ye, to be enslaved
By sorceries, cheats—alas ! the same tricks, tried
On my poor children in this nook o' the earth,
Could triumph, that have been successively
Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations through :
"*Romaioi, Ioudaioite kai proselutoi,*
"Cretes and Arabians"—you are duped the last.
Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye
Tear me ! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch
That so much love was wasted—every gift
Rejected, from his benison I brought,
Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk
An hour since at the harbour's mouth, by that . . .
That . . . never will I speak his hated name !
[*To his* Servants.] What was the name his fellow slip-fetter
Called their arch-wizard by? [*They whisper.*] Oh, Djabal was 't?
Druses. But how a sorcerer? false wherein?
Nuncio. (Ay, Djabal !)
How false? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .
Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn . . .
What I sailed hither solely to divulge—
How by his spells the demons were allured
To seize you : not that these be aught save lies
And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,
By measures such as these, he would have led you
Into a monstrous ruin : follow ye?
Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons?
Druses. Hark ye !
Nuncio. —Be of one privilege amerced?
No ! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies are !

No! With the Patriarch's licence, still I bid
Tear him to pieces who misled you! Haste!
Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes are white fire! After all, I know nothing of Djabal beyond what Karshook says; he knows but what Khalil says, who knows just what Djabal says himself. Now, the little Copht Prophet, I saw at Cairo in my youth, began by promising each bystander three full measures of wheat . . .

Enter KHALIL *and the initiated* DRUSES

Khalil. Venice and her deliverance are at hand:
Their fleet stands through the harbour. Hath he slain
The Prefect yet? Is Djabal's change come yet?
Nuncio [*to* Attendants]. What 's this of Venice? who 's this boy?
[Attendants *whisper.*] One Khalil?
Djabal's accomplice, Loys called, but now,
The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear?
[*To the Druses.*] I cannot hear ye with these aged ears:
Is it so? Ye would have my troops assist?
Doth he abet him in his sorceries?
Down with the cheat, guards, as my children bid! [*They spring at* KHALIL; *as he beats them back,*
Stay! No more bloodshed! Spare deluded youth!
Whom seek'st thou? (I will teach him)—whom, my child?
Thou know'st not what these know, what these declare.
I am an old man as thou seest—have done
With life; and what should move me but the truth?
Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe?
'T is I interpret for thy tribe.

Khalil. Oh, this
Is the expected Nuncio! Druses, hear—
Endure ye this? Unworthy to partake
The glory Hakeem gains you! While I speak,
The ships touch land: who makes for Lebanon?
They plant the winged lion in these halls!
Nuncio [*aside*]. If it be true! Venice? Oh, never true!
Yet Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,
So fain get footing here, stand close by Rhodes!
Oh, to be duped this way!
Khalil. Ere he appear
And lead you gloriously, repent, I say!
Nuncio [*aside*]. Nor any way to stretch the arch-wizard stark
Ere the Venetians come? Cut off the head,
The trunk were easily stilled. [*To the* Druses.] He? Bring him forth!
Since so you needs will have it, I assent.
You 'd judge him, say you, on the spot—confound
The sorcerer in his very circle? Where 's
Our short black-bearded sallow friend who swore
He 'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon by one stab?
Bring Djabal forth at once!
Druses. Ay, bring him forth!
The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk,
And we 're the Patriarch's children—true men, we!
Where is the glory? Show us all the glory!
Khalil. You dare not so insult him! What, not see . . .
(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstructed,
Untrusted: they know nothing of our Khalif!)
—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise
'T is but to give yourselves the chance of seeming
To have some influence in your own Return!
That all may say ye would have trusted him

Without the all-convincing glory—ay,
And did! Embrace the occasion, friends! For, think—
What wonder when his change takes place? But now
For your sakes, he should not reveal himself.
No: could I ask and have, I would not ask
The change yet!

Enter DJABAL *and* LOYS

Spite of all, reveal thyself!
I had said, pardon them for me—for Anael—
For our sakes pardon these besotted men—
Ay, for thine own—they hurt not thee! Yet now
One thought swells in me and keeps down all else.
This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has called
Imposture thy whole course, all bitter things
Has said: he is but an old fretful man!
Hakeem—nay, I must call thee Hakeem now—
Reveal thyself! See! Where is Anael? See!
Loys [*to* DJABAL]. Here are thy people. Keep thy word to me!
Djabal. Who of my people hath accused me?
Nuncio. So!
So this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not?
A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day!
May it be augury of thy after-life!
Ever prove truncheon of the Church as now
That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having charge
Of the Isle here, I claim thee [*turning to* DJABAL] as these bid me,
Forfeit for murder done thy lawful prince,
Thou conjurer that peep'st and mutterest!
Why should I hold thee from their hands? (Spells, children?
But hear how I dispose of all his spells!)

Thou art a prophet?—wouldst entice thy tribe
From me?—thou workest miracles? (Attend!
Let him but move me with his spells!) I, Nuncio . . .
Djabal. . . . Which how thou camest to be, I say not now,
Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke!
Ply thee with spells, forsooth! What need of spells?
If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop
To ratify thy compact with her foe,
The Hospitallers, for this Isle—withdraw
Her warrant of the deed which reinstates
My people in their freedom, tricked away
By him I slew,—refuse to convoy us
To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave—
Then will be time to try what spells can do!
Dost thou dispute the Republic's power?
Nuncio. Lo ye!
He tempts me too, the wily exorcist!
No! The renowned Republic was and is
The Patriarch's friend: 't is not for courting Venice
That I—that these implore thy blood of me.
Lo ye, the subtle miscreant! Ha, so subtle?
Ye, Druses, hear him. Will ye be deceived?
How he evades me! Where 's the miracle
He works? I bid him to the proof—fish up
Your galley-full of bezants that he sank!
That were a miracle! One miracle!
Enough of trifling, for it chafes my years.
I am the Nuncio, Druses! I stand forth
To save you from the good Republic's rage
When she shall find her fleet was summoned here
To aid the mummeries of a knave like this.
[*As the* Druses *hesitate, his* Attendants *whisper.*
Ah, well suggested! Why, we hold the while
One who, his close confederate till now,

Confesses Djabal at the last a cheat,
And every miracle a cheat. Who throws me
His head? I make three offers, once I offer,—
And twice . . .
Djabal. Let who moves perish at my foot!
Khalil. Thanks, Hakeem, thanks! Oh, Anael, Maani,
Why tarry they?
Druses [*to each other*]. He can! He can! Live fire—
[*To the* NUNCIO.] I say he can, old man! Thou know'st him not.
Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,
Plays fawning round him. See! The change begins.
All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm.
Look not at me! It was not I!
Djabal. What Druse
Accused me, as he saith? I bid each bone
Crumble within that Druse! None, Loys, none
Of my own people, as thou said'st, have raised
A voice against me.
Nuncio [*aside*]. Venice to come! Death!
Djabal [*continuing*]. Confess and go unscathed, however false!
Seest thou my Druses, Luke? I would submit
To thy pure malice did one Druse confess!
How said I, Loys?
Nuncio [*to his* Attendants *who whisper*]. Ah, ye counsel so?
[*Aloud.*] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,
Disclosed the treason! Now I have thee, wizard!
Ye hear that? If one speaks, he bids you tear him
Joint after joint: well then, one does speak! One,
Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,
But who hath voluntarily proposed

To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault
Of having trusted him.
[*They bring in a veiled* Druse.
Loys. Now, Djabal, now!
Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts thee! Make a ring, sons. Speak!
Expose this Djabal—what he was, and how:
The wiles he used, the aims he cherished: all,
Explicitly as late 't was spoken to these
My servants: I absolve and pardon thee.
Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready, Djabal?
Djabal. Speak,
Recreant!
Druses. Stand back, fool! farther! Suddenly
You shall see some huge serpent glide from under
The empty vest, or down will thunder crash!
Back, Khalil!
Khalil. I go back? Thus go I back!
[*To* ANAEL.] Unveil! Nay, thou shalt face the Khalif! Thus!
[*He tears away* ANAEL'S *veil;* DJABAL *folds his arms and bows his head; the* Druses *fall back;* LOYS *springs from the side of* DJABAL *and the* NUNCIO.
Loys. Then she was true—she only of them all!
True to her eyes—may keep those glorious eyes,
And now be mine, once again mine! Oh, Anael!
Dared I think thee a partner in his crime—
That blood could soil that hand? nay, 't is mine —Anael,
—Not mine?—who offer thee before all these
My heart, my sword, my name—so thou wilt say
That Djabal, who affirms thou art his bride,
Lies—say but that he lies!
Djabal. Thou, Anael?

Loys. Nay, Djabal, nay, one chance for me—
the last!
Thou hast had every other; thou hast spoken
Days, nights, what falsehood listed thee—let me
Speak first now; I will speak now!
Nuncio. Loys, pause!
Thou art the Duke's son, Bretagne's choicest stock,
Loys of Dreux, God's sepulchre's first sword:
This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this trample
To earth?
Loys [*to* ANAEL]. Who had foreseen that one day,
Loys
Would stake these gifts against some other good
In the whole world? I give them thee! I would
My strong will might bestow real shape on them,
That I might see, with my own eyes, thy foot
Tread on their very neck! 'T is not by gifts
I put aside this Djabal: we will stand—
We do stand, see, two men! Djabal, stand forth!
Who 's worth her, I or thou? I—who for Anael
Uprightly, purely kept my way, the long
True way—left thee each by-path, boldly lived
Without the lies and blood,—or thou, or thou?
Me! love me, Anael! Leave the blood and him!
[*To* DJABAL.] Now speak—now, quick on this that
I have said,—
Thou with the blood, speak if thou art a man!
Djabal [*to* ANAEL]. And was it thou betrayedst
me? 'T is well!
I have deserved this of thee, and submit.
Nor 't is much evil thou inflictest: life
Ends here. The cedars shall not wave for us:
For there was crime, and must be punishment.
See fate! By thee I was seduced, by thee
I perish: yet do I—can I repent?
I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever

By my Frank policy,—and with, in turn,
My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart—
While these remained in equipoise, I lived
—Nothing; had either been predominant,
As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
I had been something;—now, each has destroyed
The other—and behold, from out their crash,
A third and better nature rises up—
My mere man's-nature! And I yield to it:
I love thee, I who did not love before!
Anael. Djabal!
Djabal. It seemed love, but it was not love:
How could I love while thou adoredst me?
Now thou despisest, art above me so
Immeasurably! Thou, no other, doomest
My death now; this my steel shall execute
Thy judgment; I shall feel thy hand in it.
Oh luxury to worship, to submit,
Transcended, doomed to death by thee!
Anael. My Djabal!
Djabal. Dost hesitate? I force thee then. Approach,
Druses! for I am out of reach of fate;
No further evil waits me. Speak the doom!
Here, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear, Loys!
Anael. HAKEEM! [*She falls dead.*
[*The* Druses *scream, grovelling before him.*
Druses. Ah Hakeem!—not on me thy wrath!
Biamrallah, pardon! never doubted I!
Ha, dog, how sayest thou?
[*They surround and seize the* NUNCIO *and his* Guards. LOYS *flings himself upon the body of* ANAEL, *on which* DJABAL *continues to gaze as stupefied.*
Nuncio. Caitiffs! Have ye eyes?

Whips, racks should teach you! What, his fools? his dupes?
Leave me! Unhand me!
Khalil [*approaching* DJABAL *timidly*]. Save her for my sake!
She was already thine; she would have shared
To-day thine exaltation: think, this day
Her hair was plaited thus because of thee!
Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel!
Nuncio [*struggling with those who have seized him*]. What, because
His leman dies for him? You think it hard
To die? Oh, would you were at Rhodes, and choice
Of deaths should suit you!
Khalil [*bending over* ANAEL'S *body*]. Just restore her life!
So little does it! there—the eyelids tremble!
'T was not my breath that made them: and the lips
Move of themselves. I could restore her life!
Hakeem, we have forgotten—have presumed
On our free converse: we are better taught.
See, I kiss—how I kiss thy garment's hem
For her! She kisses it—Oh, take her deed
In mine! Thou dost believe now, Anael?—See,
She smiles! Were her lips open o'er the teeth
Thus, when I spoke first? She believes in thee!
Go not without her to the cedars, lord!
Or leave us both—I cannot go alone!
I have obeyed thee, if I dare so speak:
Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal knew?
Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast
Upon thy hand, and yet thou speakest not?
Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere thou
Exalt thyself, O Hakeem! save thou her!
Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will arrive
And find me in their toils—dead, very like,

Under their feet!
What way—not one way yet
To foil them? None? [*Observing* DJABAL'S *face.*
What ails the Khalif? Ah,
That ghastly face! A way to foil them yet!
[*To the* Druses.] Look to your Khalif, Druses!
Is that face
God Hakeem's? Where is triumph,—where is
. . . what
Said he of exaltation—hath he promised
So much to-day? Why then, exalt thyself!
Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy soul
In splendour! Now, bear witness! here I stand—
I challenge him exalt himself, and I
Become, for that, a Druse like all of you!
The Druses. Exalt thyself! Exalt thyself, O
Hakeem!
Djabal [*advances*]. I can confess now all from
first to last.
There is no longer shame for me. I am . . .
[*Here the Venetian trumpet sounds: the*
Druses *shout*, DJABAL'S *eye catches the*
expression of those about him, and, as
the old dream comes back, he is again
confident and inspired.
—Am I not Hakeem? And ye would have crawled
But yesterday within these impure courts
Where now ye stand erect! Not grand enough?
—What more could be conceded to such beasts
As all of you, so sunk and base as you,
Than a mere man? A man among such beasts
Was miracle enough: yet him you doubt,
Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—
With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio
Thus—(see the baffled hypocrite!) and, best,
The Prefect there!

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine!
Nuncio. He lies—and twice he lies—and thrice he lies!
Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!
Djabal. Druses! we shall henceforth be far away—
Out of mere mortal ken—above the cedars—
But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,
Repeopling the old solitudes,—through thee,
My Khalil! Thou art full of me: I fill
Thee full—my hands thus fill thee! Yestereve,
—Nay, but this morn, I deemed thee ignorant
Of all to do, requiring word of mine
To teach it: now, thou hast all gifts in one,
With truth and purity go other gifts,
All gifts come clustering to that. Go, lead
My people home whate'er betide!
[*Turning to the* Druses.] Ye take
This Khalil for my delegate? To him
Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon—
Ye follow?
Druses. We follow! Now exalt thyself!
Djabal [*raises* Loys]. Then to thee, Loys! How I wronged thee, Loys!
Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,
Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus.
Thou, loaded with such wrongs, the princely soul,
The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou shalt
Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!
Justice, no less, God's justice and no more,
For those I leave! To seeking this, devote
Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life:
And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,
My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they shall
Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)
—One cedar-blossom in thy ducal cap,

One thought of Anael in thy heart,—perchance,
One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,
His last word to the living speaks! This done,
Resume thy course, and, first amidst the first
In Europe, take my heart along with thee!
Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—
What shall withstand thee then?
[*He bends over* ANAEL.] And last to thee!
Ah, did I dream I was to have, this day,
Exalted thee? A vain dream: hast thou not
Won greater exaltation? What remains
But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?
Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!

[*He stabs himself. As he falls, supported by* KHALIL *and* LOYS, *the* Venetians *enter; the* ADMIRAL *advances.*

Admiral. God and St. Mark for Venice! Plant the Lion!

[*At the clash of the planted standard, the* Druses *shout and move tumultuously forward,* LOYS *drawing his sword.*

Djabal [*leading them a few steps between* KHALIL *and* LOYS]. On to the Mountain! At the Mountain, Druses! [*Dies.*

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

A TRAGEDY

PERSONS

MILDRED TRESHAM
GUENDOLEN TRESHAM
THOROLD, Earl TRESHAM
AUSTIN TRESHAM
HENRY, Earl MERTOUN
GERARD, *and other retainers of* Lord TRESHAM

TIME, 17—

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

1843

ACT I

SCENE I.—*The interior of a lodge in* Lord TRESHAM'S *park. Many* Retainers *crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion.* GERARD, *the warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

1st Retainer. Ay, do! push, friends, and then
you 'll push down me!
—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot
Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?
Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
But there 's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here 's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard!
Gerard. Save your courtesies, my friend.
Here is my place.
2nd Retainer. Now, Gerard, out with it!
What makes you sullen, this of all the days
I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match
With our Lord Tresham through the country-side,
Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our master's sister's hand?
Gerard. What then?

2nd Retainer. What then? Why, you, she speaks to, if she meets
Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
The boughs to let her through her forest walks,
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,
You 've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues
To lay his heart and house and broad lands too
At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
One congee of the least page in his train,
You sit o' one side—"there 's the Earl," say I—
"What then?" say you!
3rd Retainer. I 'll wager he has let
Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred swim
Over the falls and gain the river!
Gerard. Ralph,
Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks?
4th Retainer. Let Gerard be!
He 's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow stock.
Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look!
Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,
To purpose?
1st Retainer. Our retainers look as fine—
That 's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself
With his white staff! Will not a knave behind
Prick him upright?
4th Retainer. He 's only bowing, fool!
The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.
1st Retainer. That 's comfort. Here 's a very cavalcade!
3rd Retainer. I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop

Of silk and silver varlets there, should find
Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holidays! Would it so disgrace
Our family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
A leash of greyhounds in my left?—
Gerard. —With Hugh
The logman for supporter, in his right
The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!
3rd Retainer. Out on you, crab! What next, what next? The Earl!
1st Retainer. Oh Walter, groom, our horses, do they match
The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six—
They paw the ground—Ah Walter! and that brute
Just on his haunches by the wheel!
6th Retainer. Ay—ay!
You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces: what 's a horse to you?
D' ye mark that beast they 've slid into the midst
So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark this further;
No leg has he to stand on!
1st Retainer. No? That 's comfort.
2nd Retainer. Peace, Cook! The Earl descends. Well, Gerard, see
The Earl at least! Come, there 's a proper man,
I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,
Has got a starrier eye.
3rd Retainer. His eyes are blue:
But leave my hawks alone!
4th Retainer. So young, and yet
So tall and shapely!
5th Retainer. Here 's Lord Tresham's self!
There now—there 's what a nobleman should be!
He 's older, graver, loftier, he 's more like
A House's head.

2nd Retainer. But you 'd not have a boy
—And what 's the Earl beside?—possess too soon
That stateliness?
1st Retainer. Our master takes his hand—
Richard and his white staff are on the move—
Back fall our people—(tsh!—there 's Timothy
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties,
And Peter's cursed rosette 's a-coming off!)
—At last I see our lord's back and his friend's;
And the whole beautiful bright company
Close round them—in they go! [*Jumping down from the window-bench, and making for the table and its jugs.*] Good health, long life,
Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!
6th Retainer. My father drove his father first to court,
After his marriage-day—ay, did he!
2nd Retainer. God bless
Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!
Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!
Gerard. Drink, my boys!
Don't mind me—all 's not right about me—drink!
2nd Retainer [*aside*]. He 's vexed, now, that he let the show escape!
[*To* GERARD.] Remember that the Earl returns this way.
Gerard. That way?
2nd Retainer. Just so.
Gerard. Then my way 's here. [*Goes.*
2nd Retainer. Old Gerard
Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was used
To care about the pitifullest thing
That touched the House's honour, not an eye
But his could see wherein: and on a cause
Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away

In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,
Such point decorous, and such square by rule—
He knew such niceties, no herald more:
And now—you see his humour: die he will!
2nd Retainer. God help him! Who 's for the great servants'-hall
To hear what 's going on inside? They 'd follow
Lord Tresham into the saloon.
3rd Retainer. I!—
4th Retainer. I!—
Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
Some hint of how the parley goes inside!
Prosperity to the great House once more!
Here 's the last drop!
1st Retainer. Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion*

Enter Lord TRESHAM, Lord MERTOUN, AUSTIN, *and* GUENDOLEN

Tresham. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,
To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
—Noble among the noblest in itself,
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,
New price and lustre,—(as that gem you wear,
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,
Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name
Would win you welcome!—
Mertoun. Thanks!
Tresham. —But add to that,
The worthiness and grace and dignity
Of your proposal for uniting both

Our Houses even closer than respect
Unites them now—add these, and you must grant
One favour more, nor that the least,—to think
The welcome I should give;—'tis given! My lord,
My only brother, Austin: he 's the king's.
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed
To Austin: all are yours.
Mertoun. I thank you—less
For the expressed commendings which your seal,
And only that, authenticates—forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with one
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,
A gift, which, if as calmly 't is denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
Despair within his soul. That I dare ask
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord Tresham,
I love your sister—as you 'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,
Rank, all the world thinks me, they 're yours, you know,
To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant
My true self, me without a rood of land,
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life?
Guendolen [*apart to* AUSTIN]. Why, this is loving, Austin!
Austin. He 's so young!
Guendolen. Young? Old enough, I think, to half surmise
He never had obtained an entrance here,
Were all this fear and trembling needed.

Austin. Hush!
He reddens.
Guendolen. Mark him, Austin; that 's true love!
Ours must begin again.
Tresham. We 'll sit, my lord.
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.
That I am wholly satisfied with you
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye
Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.
Mertoun. But you, you grant my suit?
I have your word if hers?
Tresham. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?
Mertoun. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes,
remember, touch;
I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game: the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours,—or else
Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight
And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither. I have come upon
The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And—and then . . . I have seen her.
Guendolen [*aside to* AUSTIN]. Note that mode
Of faltering out that, when a lady passed,
He, having eyes, did see her! You had said—
"On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;
"Observed a red, where red should not have been,
"Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough
"Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk
Be lessoned for the future!

Tresham. What 's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—
You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friends are—how imbued with lore
The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus
We brothers talk!
Mertoun. I thank you.
Tresham. In a word,
Control 's not for this lady; but her wish
To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased: herself creates
The want she means to satisfy. My heart
Prefers your suit to her as 't were its own.
Can I say more?
Mertoun. No more—thanks, thanks—no more!
Tresham. This matter then discussed . . .
Mertoun. —We 'll waste no breath
On aught less precious. I 'm beneath the roof
Which holds her: while I thought of that, my speech
To you would wander—as it must not do,
Since as you favour me I stand or fall.
I pray you suffer that I take my leave!
Tresham. With less regret 't is suffered, that again
We meet, I hope, so shortly.
Mertoun. We? again?—
Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you will crown

Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint a day
For me to wait on you—and her.
Tresham. So soon
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—
A messenger shall bring you the result.
Mertoun. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.
Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.
Tresham. So may it prove!
Mertoun. You, lady, you, sir, take
My humble salutation!
Guendolen and Austin. Thanks!
Tresham. Within there!
[Servants *enter.* TRESHAM *conducts* MERTOUN *to the door. Meantime* AUSTIN *remarks,*
Well,
Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now! I 'd not think that all was safe
Because my lady's brother stood my friend!
Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say, yes—
"She 'll not say, no,"—what comes it to beside?
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,
"For Heaven's sake urge this on her—put in this—
"Forget not, as you 'd save me, t' other thing,—
"Then set down what she says, and how she looks,
"And if she smiles, and" (in an under breath)
"Only let her accept me, and do you
"And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"
Guendolen. That way you 'd take, friend Austin? What a shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervour 's run to waste!
Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?
The Earl 's a fool.
Austin. Here 's Thorold. Tell him so!
Tresham [*returning*]. Now, voices, voices! 'St! the lady 's first!
How seems he?—seems he not . . . come, faith give fraud
The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!
Down with fraud, up with faith! How seems the Earl?
A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,
As you will never! come—the Earl?
Guendolen. He 's young.
Tresham. What 's she? an infant save in heart and brain.
Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! And you . . .
Austin, how old is she?
Guendolen. There 's tact for you!
I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him . . .
Tresham. Well?
Guendolen. —With lacking wit.
Tresham. He lacked wit? Where might he lack wit, so please you?
Guendolen. In standing straighter than the steward's rod
And making you the tiresomest harangue,
Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,
"Your cousin there will do me detriment
"He little dreams of: he 's absorbed, I see,
"In my old name and fame—be sure he 'll leave
"My Mildred, when his best account of me

"Is ended, in full confidence I wear
"My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.
"I 'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .
Tresham. . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
"Of me and my demerits." You are right!
He should have said what now I say for him.
Yon golden creature, will you help us all?
Here 's Austin means to vouch for much, but you
—You are . . . what Austin only knows! Come up,
All three of us: she 's in the library
No doubt, for the day 's wearing fast. Precede!
Guendolen. Austin, how we must—!
Tresham. Must what? Must speak truth,
Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!
I challenge you!
Guendolen. Witchcraft 's a fault in him,
For you 're bewitched.
Tresham. What 's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—
Next day at furthest.
Guendolen. Ne'er instruct me!
Tresham. Come!
—He 's out of your good graces, since forsooth,
He stood not as he 'd carry us by storm
With his perfections! You 're for the composed
Manly assured becoming confidence!
—Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I 'll give you . . .
I 'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled
With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE III.—MILDRED'S *chamber. A painted window overlooks the park.* MILDRED *and* GUENDOLEN

Guendolen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains.
I have not left
Our talkers in the library, and climbed
The wearisome ascent to this your bower
In company with you,—I have not dared . . .
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell
—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most
Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,
He would maintain, were grey instead of blue—
I think I brought him to contrition !—Well,
I have not done such things, (all to deserve
A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,)
To be dismissed so coolly.
Mildred. Guendolen !
What have I done? what could suggest . . .
Guendolen. There, there !
Do I not comprehend you 'd be alone
To throw those testimonies in a heap,
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's
Ill-timed misplaced attempted smartnesses—
And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you
Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have !
Demand, be answered ! Lack I ears and eyes ?
Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table
The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,
Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—

The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed?
Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!
Mildred. My brother—
Did he . . . you said that he received him well?
Guendolen. If I said only "well" I said not much.
Oh, stay—which brother?
Mildred. Thorold! who—who else?
Guendolen. Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half,—
Nay, hear me out—with us he 's even gentler
Than we are with our birds. Of this great House
The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk:
And in the world, the court, if men would cite
The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name
Rises of its clear nature to their lips.
But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
And care no more about what drew it down.
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment;
Is he content?
Mildred. You wrong him, Guendolen.
Guendolen. He 's proud, confess; so proud with brooding o'er
The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all . . .
Mildred. Dear Guendolen, 't is late!
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 't is midnight.
Guendolen. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings, and receive
One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one . . .
Mildred. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun?

Guendolen. Not your brother; therefore,
Not the whole world.
Mildred. I am weary, Guendolen.
Bear with me!
Guendolen. I am foolish.
Mildred. Oh no, kind!
But I would rest.
Guendolen. Good night and rest to you!
I said how gracefully his mantle lay
Beneath the rings of his light hair?
Mildred. Brown hair.
Guendolen. Brown? why, it *is* brown: how could you know that?
Mildred. How? did not you—Oh, Austin 't was, declared
His hair was light, not brown—my head!—and look,
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber! Sweet,
Good night!
Guendolen. Forgive me—sleep the soundlier for me! [*Going, she turns suddenly.*
Mildred!
Perdition! all 's discovered! Thorold finds
—That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers
Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance!
[*Goes.*
Mildred. Is she—can she be really gone at last?
My heart! I shall not reach the window. Needs
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer.
[*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the Virgin's image in the window, and places it by the purple pane.*
There!
[*She returns to the seat in front.*

Mildred and Mertoun ! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride !
Too late ! 'T is sweet to think of, sweeter still
To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning ; but I know
It comes too late : 't will sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon.

[*A noise without.*

The voice ! Oh why, why glided sin the snake
Into the paradise Heaven meant us both ?

[*The window opens softly. A low voice sings.*

There 's a woman like a dew-drop, she 's so purer than the purest;
And her noble heart 's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith 's the surest:
And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape cluster,
Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble :
Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the bird's warble !

[*A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.*

And this woman says, " My days were sunless and my nights were moonless,
" Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's outbreak tuneless,
" If you loved me not !" And I who—(ah, for words of flame !) adore her,
Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—

[*He enters, approaches her seat, and bends over her.*

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,
And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she makes me !

[*The* Earl *throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.*

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved !

Mildred. Sit, Henry—do not take my hand !

Mertoun. 'T is mine.
The meeting that appalled us both so much
Is ended.
Mildred. What begins now?
Mertoun. Happiness
Such as the world contains not.
Mildred. That is it.
Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
The whole world's best of blisses: we—do we
Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what mine
Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,
And so familiar now; this will not be!
Mertoun. Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face,
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
The truth, as—what had e'er prevailed on me
Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last
Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?
Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
On the strange unrest of our night, confused
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops
On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,
And no expressless glory in the East?
When I am by you, to be ever by you,
When I have won you and may worship you,
Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be"?
Mildred. Sin has surprised us, so will punishment.
Mertoun. No—me alone, who sinned alone!
Mildred. The night
You likened our past life to—was it storm
Throughout to you then, Henry?

Mertoun. Of your life
I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste
A thought about when you are by me?—you
It was, I said my folly called the storm
And pulled the night upon. 'T was day with me—
Perpetual dawn with me.
Mildred. Come what, come will,
You have been happy: take my hand!
Mertoun [after a pause]. How good
Your brother is! I figured him a cold—
Shall I say, haughty man?
Mildred. They told me all.
I know all.
Mertoun. It will soon be over.
Mildred. Over?
Oh, what is over? what must I live through
And say, "'t is over"? Is our meeting over?
Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love—with brow
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips
Which make believe that when they strive to form
Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
It is the nearest ever they approached
A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . . lip—
With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .
Ah God, some prodigy of thine will stop
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
The love, the shame, and the despair—with them
Round me aghast as round some cursed fount

That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I 'll not
. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw
This vengeance down? I 'll not affect a grace
That 's gone from me—gone once, and gone for ever!

Mertoun. Mildred, my honour is your own. I 'll share
Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.
A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth
Some better way of saving both of us.

Mildred. I 'll meet their faces, Henry!

Mertoun. When? to-morrow!
Get done with it!

Mildred. Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!
Next day! I never shall prepare my words
And looks and gestures sooner.—How you must
Despise me!

Mertoun. Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted—still
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,
To heaven! but Mildred, answer me,—first pace
The chamber with me—once again—now, say
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
—Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off
And cast it from me!—but no—no, you 'll not
Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat that?

Mildred. Dear Henry!

Mertoun. I was scarce a boy—e'en now
What am I more? And you were infantine
When first I met you; why, your hair fell loose
On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now
Only in the recalling how it burned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms

To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,
Who knew? I spoke. Oh, Mildred, feel you not
That now, while I remember every glance
Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test
And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,
Resolved the treasure of a first and last
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,
—That now I think upon your purity
And utter ignorance of guilt—your own
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk
A silly language, but interpret, you!)
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
If you had pity on my passion, pity
On my protested sickness of the soul
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch
Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you
Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts—
If I grew mad at last with enterprise
And must behold my beauty in her bower
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even
My own desires—what then were you?) if sorrow—
Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce
My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
Is false and lie to God and my own soul?
Contempt were all of this!
Mildred. Do you believe . . .
Or, Henry, I 'll not wrong you—you believe
That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er
The past. We 'll love on; you will love me still.
Mertoun. Oh, to love less what one has injured!
Dove,
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—

Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?
Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?
Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and device!
Mildred, I love you and you love me.
Mildred. Go!
Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.
Mertoun. This is not our last meeting?
Mildred. One night more.
Mertoun. And then—think, then!
Mildred. Then, no sweet courtship-days,
No dawning consciousness of love for us,
No strange and palpitating births of sense
From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,
Reserves and confidences: morning 's over!
Mertoun. How else should love's perfected noontide follow?
All the dawn promised shall the day perform.
Mildred. So may it be! but——
You are cautious, Love?
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?
Mertoun. Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting 's fixed
To-morrow night?
Mildred. Farewell! Stay, Henry . . . wherefore?
His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf
Receives him: now the moonlight as he runs
Embraces him—but he must go—is gone.
Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks, my Love!
He 's gone. Oh, I 'll believe him every word!
I was so young, I loved him so, I had
No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.
There may be pardon yet: all 's doubt beyond.
Surely the bitterness of death is past.

ACT II

SCENE.—*The Library*

Enter Lord TRESHAM, *hastily*

Tresham. This way! In, Gerard, quick!
[*As* GERARD *enters*, TRESHAM *secures the door.*
Now speak! or, wait—
I 'll bid you speak directly. [*Seats himself.*
Now repeat
Firmly and circumstantially the tale
You just now told me; it eludes me; either
I did not listen, or the half is gone
Away from me. How long have you lived here?
Here in my house, your father kept our woods
Before you?
Gerard. —As his father did, my lord.
I have been eating, sixty years almost,
Your bread.
Tresham. Yes, yes. You ever were of all
The servants in my father's house, I know,
The trusted one. You 'll speak the truth.
Gerard. I 'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .
Tresham. Since when?
Gerard. At least
A month—each midnight has some man access
To Lady Mildred's chamber.
Tresham. Tush, "access"—
No wide words like "access" to me!
Gerard. He runs

Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .
Tresham. The last great yew-tree?
Gerard. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform. Then he . . .
Tresham. Quick!
Gerard. Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the top,
—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
That reaches to the lady's casement—
Tresham. —Which
He enters not! Gerard, some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached,—to merely have approached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon. He does not enter?
Gerard?
Gerard. There is a lamp that 's full i' the midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's . . .
Tresham. Leave that name out! Well?
That lamp?
Gerard. —Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane; he waits
For that among the boughs: at sight of that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the lady's casement, enter there . . .
Tresham. —And stay?
Gerard. An hour, two hours.
Tresham. And this you saw
Once?—twice?—quick!
Gerard. Twenty times.
Tresham. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?

Gerard. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger stag
That broke the pale, I saw the man.
Tresham. Yet sent
No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?
Gerard. But
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,
In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.
Tresham [*after a pause*]. You have no cause
—Who could have cause to do my sister wrong?
Gerard. Oh, my lord, only once—let me this once
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted
All this, I 've groaned as if a fiery net
Plucked me this way and that—fire if I turned
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire
If down I flung myself and strove to die.
The lady could not have been seven years old
When I was trusted to conduct her safe
Through the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn
I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
Within a month. She ever had a smile
To greet me with—she . . . if it could undo
What 's done, to lop each limb from off this trunk . . .
All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—
I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt
For Heaven's compelling. But when I was fixed
To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts
What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed
Either I must confess to you, or die:
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
That crawls, to have betrayed my lady.

Tresham. No—
No, Gerard!
Gerard. Let me go!
Tresham. A man, you say:
What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind?
What dress?
Gerard. A slouched hat and a large dark
foreign cloak
Wraps his whole form; even his face is hid;
But I should judge him young: no hind, be sure!
Tresham. Why?
Gerard. He is ever armed: his sword projects
Beneath the cloak.
Tresham. Gerard,—I will not say
No word, no breath of this!
Gerard. Thanks, thanks, my lord! [*Goes.*
Tresham [*paces the room. After a pause*]. Oh,
thought 's absurd!—as with some monstrous
fact
Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give
Merciful God that made the sun and stars,
The waters and the green delights of earth,
The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—
Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,
And yield my reason up, inadequate
To reconcile what yet I do behold—
Blasting my sense! There 's cheerful day outside:
This is my library, and this the chair
My father used to sit in carelessly
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
Between his knees to question him: and here
Gerard our grey retainer,—as he says,
Fed with our food, from sire to son, an age,—
Has told a story—I am to believe!
That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales are true,
Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!

Would she, or could she, err—much less, confound
All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven
Keep me within its hand!—I will sit here
Until thought settle and I see my course.
Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!
[*As he sinks his head between his arms on the table,* GUENDOLEN'S *voice is heard at the door.*
Lord Tresham! [*She knocks.*] Is Lord Tresham there?
[TRESHAM, *hastily turning, pulls down the first book above him and opens it.*
Tresham. Come in! [*She enters.*
Ha, Guendolen!—good morning.
Guendolen. Nothing more?
Tresham. What should I say more?
Guendolen. Pleasant question! more?
This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain
Last night till close on morning with "the Earl,"
"The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate
Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
What is all this? You are not well!
Tresham. Who, I?
You laugh at me.
Guendolen. Has what I 'm fain to hope,
Arrived then? Does that huge tome show some blot
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back
Than Arthur's time?
Tresham. When left you Mildred's chamber?
Guendolen. Oh, late enough, I told you! The main thing
To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,
Content yourself, she 'll grant this paragon
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .
Tresham. Send her here!

Guendolen. Thorold?
Tresham. I mean—acquaint her, Guendolen,
—But mildly!
Guendolen. Mildly?
Tresham. Ah, you guessed aright!
I am not well: there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—
That is, at once! here in the library!
The passage in that old Italian book
We hunted for so long is found, say, found—
And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
That she must come—and instantly!
Guendolen. I 'll die
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!
Tresham. Go! or, Guendolen,
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—
In the adjoining gallery! There, go!
[GUENDOLEN *goes.*
Another lesson to me! You might bid
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct
Some sly investigation point by point
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch
The inquisitorial cleverness some praise.
If you had told me yesterday, "There 's one
"You needs must circumvent and practise with,
"Entrap by policies, if you would worm
"The truth out: and that one is—Mildred!"
There,
There—reasoning is thrown away on it!
Prove she 's unchaste . . . why, you may after prove
That she 's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!
Where I can comprehend nought, nought 's to say.
Or do, or think. Force on me but the first
Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,
And I shall ne'er make count of them.

Enter MILDRED

Mildred. What book
Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen
Thought you were pale; you are not pale. That book?
That 's Latin surely.
Tresham. Mildred, here 's a line,
(Don't lean on me: I 'll English it for you)
"Love conquers all things." What love conquers them?
What love should you esteem—best love?
Mildred. True love.
Tresham. I mean, and should have said, whose love is best
Of all that love or that profess to love?
Mildred. The list 's so long: there 's father's, mother's, husband's . . .
Tresham. Mildred, I do believe a brother's love
For a sole sister must exceed them all.
For see now, only see! there 's no alloy
Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold
Of other loves—no gratitude to claim;
You never gave her life, not even aught
That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,
Enriched her—so, your love can claim no right
O'er her save pure love's claim: that 's what I call
Freedom from earthliness. You 'll never hope
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods
Or played together in the meadow hay.
Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your worth
Is felt, there 's growing sympathy of tastes,
There 's ripened friendship, there 's confirmed esteem:

—Much head these make against the new-comer!
The startling apparition, the strange youth—
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
This Ovid ever sang about) your soul
. . . Her soul, that is,—the sister's soul! With her
'T was winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
"Arise and come away!" Come whither?—far
Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
The brother's somewhat insignificant
Array of rights! All which he knows before,
Has calculated on so long ago!
I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)
Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware
How soon the background must be place for it,
—I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
All the world's love in its unworldliness.
Mildred. What is this for?
Tresham. This, Mildred, is it for!
Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon!
That 's one of many points my haste left out—
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
Between the being tied to you by birth,
And you, until those slender threads compose
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours:
So close you live and yet so far apart!
And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
The sweet and palpitating mystery
That makes her sacred? You—for you I mean,
Shall I speak, shall I not speak?
Mildred. Speak!
Tresham. I will.
Is there a story men could—any man

Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?
I 'll never think there 's falsehood on that lip.
Say "There is no such story men could tell,"
And I 'll believe you, though I disbelieve
The world—the world of better men than I,
And women such as I suppose you. Speak!
[*After a pause.*] Not speak? Explain then! Clear
it up then! Move
Some of the miserable weight away
That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?
Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I
Could bring myself to plainly make their charge
Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?
[*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has night
by night
Admittance to your chamber?
[*After a pause.*] Then, his name!
Till now, I only had a thought for you:
But now,—his name!
Mildred. Thorold, do you devise
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
There be! 'T is nought to say that I 'll endure
And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge
Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire:
But do not plunge me into other guilt!
Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.
Tresham. Then judge yourself! How should I
act? Pronounce!
Mildred. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt
me thus!
To die here in this chamber by that sword
Would seem like punishment: so should I glide,
Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!
'T were easily arranged for me: but you—
What would become of you?
Tresham. And what will now

Become of me? I 'll hide your shame and mine
From every eye; the dead must heave their hearts
Under the marble of our chapel-floor;
They cannot rise and blast you. You may wed
Your paramour above our mother's tomb;
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.
We too will somehow wear this one day out:
But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl!
The youth without suspicion face can come
From Heaven, and heart from . . . whence proceed such hearts?
I have despatched last night at your command
A missive bidding him present himself
To-morrow—here—thus much is said; the rest
Is understood as if 't were written down—
"His suit finds favour in your eyes." Now dictate
This morning's letter that shall countermand
Last night's—do dictate that!
Mildred. But, Thorold—if
I will receive him as I said?
Tresham. The Earl?
Mildred. I will receive him.
Tresham [*starting up*]. Ho there! Guendolen!

GUENDOLEN *and* AUSTIN *enter*

And, Austin, you are welcome, too! Look there!
The woman there!
Austin and Guendolen. How? Mildred?
Tresham. Mildred once!
Now the receiver night by night, when sleep
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
—I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which holds
You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
A thousand Treshams—never one like her!
No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick

Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
O' the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,
The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!
Not one composer of the bacchant's mien
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a word!
Know her!
Guendolen. Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least!
Thorold—she 's dead, I 'd say, but that she stands
Rigid as stone and whiter!
Tresham. You have heard . . .
Guendolen. Too much! You must proceed no further.
Mildred. Yes—
Proceed! All 's truth. Go from me!
Tresham. All is truth,
She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,
All this I would forgive in her. I 'd con
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I 'd take
Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
I 'd bind myself before them to exact
The prescribed vengeance—and one word of hers,
The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
Above all prides, my all in all so long,
Would scatter every trace of my resolve.
What were it silently to waste away
And see her waste away from this day forth,
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
It were not so impossible to bear.
But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed
Of love with the successful gallant there,
She calmly bids me help her to entice,

Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
Who thinks her all that's chaste and good and pure,
—Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit
As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?
—That she 'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her own phrase)—
This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,
Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet have laughed,
"Talk not to me of torture—I 'll betray
"No comrade I 've pledged faith to!"—you have heard
Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—tied
By wild illicit ties to losels vile
You 'd tempt them to forsake; and they 'll reply
"Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find
"In him, why should I leave him then for gold,
"Repute or friends?"—and you have felt your heart
Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
As to so many friends; bad as you please,
You 've felt they were God's men and women still,
So, not to be disowned by you. But she
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
Their intercourse the surelier: and, for this,
I curse her to her face before you all.
Shame hunt her from the earth! Then Heaven do right
To both! It hears me now—shall judge her then!

[*As* MILDRED *faints and falls*, TRESHAM *rushes out.*

Austin. Stay, Tresham, we 'll accompany you!

Guendolen. We?

What, and leave Mildred? We? Why, where 's my place

But by her side, and where yours but by mine?
Mildred—one word! Only look at me, then!
Austin. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's voice.
She is unworthy to behold . . .
Guendolen. Us two?
If you spoke on reflection, and if I
Approved your speech—if you (to put the thing
At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make
The king's cause yours and fight for it, and throw
Regard to others of its right or wrong,
—If with a death-white woman you can help,
Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend
This morning, playfellow but yesterday,
Who said, or thought at least a thousand times,
"I 'd serve you if I could," should now face round
And say, "Ah, that 's to only signify
"I 'd serve you while you 're fit to serve yourself:
"So long as fifty eyes await the turn
"Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,
"I 'll proffer my assistance you 'll not need—
"When every tongue is praising you, I 'll join
"The praisers' chorus—when you 're hemmed about
"With lives between you and detraction—lives
"To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
"Rough hand should violate the sacred ring
"Their worship throws about you,—then indeed,
"Who 'll stand up for you stout as I?" If so
We said, and so we did,—not Mildred there
Would be unworthy to behold us both,
But we should be unworthy, both of us,
To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,
Which, if that sword were broken in your face
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,
And you cast out with hooting and contempt,
—Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain

Your side, go off with you and all your shame
To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,
Do you love me? Here 's Austin, Mildred,—here 's
Your brother says he does not believe half—
No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,
Look up and take his hand!
Austin. Look up and take
My hand, dear Mildred!
Mildred. I—I was so young!
Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had
No mother; God forgot me: so, I fell.
Guendolen. Mildred!
Mildred. Require no further! Did I dream
That I could palliate what is done? All 's true.
Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand?
Let go my hand! You do not know, I see.
I thought that Thorold told you.
Guendolen. What is this?
Where start you to?
Mildred. Oh, Austin, loosen me!
You heard the whole of it—your eyes were worse,
In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless
You stay to execute his sentence, loose
My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?
Guendolen. Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will wait
Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
How can we do it if we are not by?
Here 's Austin waiting patiently your will!
One spirit to command, and one to love
And to believe in it and do its best,
Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world
Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,
By just such a beginning!

Mildred. I believe
If once I threw my arms about your neck
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
Should weep again.
Guendolen. Let go her hand now, Austin!
Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think
On the world's seemings and realities,
Until I call you. [AUSTIN *goes.*
Mildred. No—I cannot weep.
No more tears from this brain—no sleep—no tears!
O Guendolen, I love you!
Guendolen. Yes: and "love"
Is a short word that says so very much!
It says that you confide in me.
Mildred. Confide!
Guendolen. Your lover's name, then! I 've so much to learn,
Ere I can work in your behalf!
Mildred. My friend,
You know I cannot tell his name.
Guendolen. At least
He is your lover? and you love him too?
Mildred. Ah, do you ask me that?—but I am fallen
So low!
Guendolen. You love him still, then?
Mildred. My sole prop
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,
Each night ere I lie down, "I was so young—
"I had no mother, and I loved him so!"
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
Trust him my soul in sleep.
Guendolen. How could you let us
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?
Mildred. There is a cloud around me.

Guendolen. But you said
You would receive his suit in spite of this?
Mildred. I say there is a cloud . . .
Guendolen. No cloud to me!
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!
Mildred. What maddest fancy . . .
Guendolen [*calling aloud*]. Austin! (spare your pains—
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—
Mildred. By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!
Have I confided in you . . .
Guendolen. Just for this!
Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!
But I did guess it—that is, I divined,
Felt by an instinct how it was: why else
Should I pronounce you free from all that heap
Of sins which had been irredeemable?
I felt they were not yours—what other way
Than this, not yours? The secret 's wholly mine!
Mildred. If you would see me die before his face . . .
Guendolen. I 'd hold my peace! And if the Earl returns
To-night?
Mildred. Ah Heaven, he 's lost!
Guendolen. I thought so. Austin!

Enter AUSTIN

Oh, where have you been hiding?
Austin. Thorold 's gone,
I know not how, across the meadow-land.
I watched him till I lost him in the skirts
O' the beech-wood.
Guendolen. Gone? All thwarts us.
Mildred. Thorold too?

Guendolen. I have thought. First lead this
Mildred to her room.
Go on the other side; and then we 'll seek
Your brother: and I 'll tell you, by the way,
The greatest comfort in the world. You said
There was a clue to all. Remember, Sweet,
He said there was a clue! I hold it. Come!

ACT III

SCENE I.—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under* MILDRED'S *window. A light seen through a central red pane*

Enter TRESHAM *through the trees*

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed glades
And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend
Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,
And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts
Again my step; the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I 'll shun
Their will no longer: do your will with me!
Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes
Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from these old
Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires,
Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,

On many a beauty's whimple—would proceed
No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root,
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
Why came I here? What must I do? [*A bell strikes.*] A bell?
Midnight! and 't is at midnight . . . Ah, I catch
—Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve.
[*He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause, enter* MERTOUN *cloaked as before.*
Mertoun. Not time! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat
Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock
I' the chapel struck as I was pushing through
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!
So much the more delicious task to watch
Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
All traces of the rough forbidden path
My rash love lured her to! Each day must see
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed:
Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I 'll not regret the past.
[*The light is placed above in the purple pane.*
And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!
I never saw it lovelier than now
It rises for the last time. If it sets,
'T is that the re-assuring sun may dawn.
[*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue,* TRESHAM *arrests his arm.*
Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp! Here 's gold.
'T was a mad freak of mine. I said I 'd pluck
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath
The casement there. Take this, and hold your peace.

Tresham. Into the moonlight yonder, come with me!
Out of the shadow!
Mertoun. I am armed, fool!
Tresham. Yes,
Or no? You 'll come into the light, or no?
My hand is on your throat—refuse!—
Mertoun. That voice!
Where have I heard . . . no—that was mild and slow.
I 'll come with you. [*They advance.*
Tresham. You 're armed: that 's well. Declare
Your name: who are you?
Mertoun. (Tresham!—she is lost!)
Tresham. Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear yourself
Exactly as, in curious dreams I 've had
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
When they 're detected, still your kind has looked!
The bravo holds an assured countenance,
The thief is voluble and plausible,
But silently the slave of lust has crouched
When I have fancied it before a man.
Your name!
Mertoun. I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—
That he for his own sake forbear to ask
My name! As heaven 's above, his future weal
Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!
I read your white inexorable face.
Know me, Lord Tresham!
[*He throws off his disguises.*
Tresham. Mertoun!
[*After a pause.*] Draw now!
Mertoun. Hear me
But speak first!

Tresham. Not one least word on your life!
Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
The least word that informs me how you live
And yet seem what you seem! No doubt 't was you
Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.
We should join hands in frantic sympathy
If you once taught me the unteachable,
Explained how you can live so, and so lie.
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
The old belief—a life like yours is still
Impossible. Now draw!
Mertoun. Not for my sake,
Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,
And most for her sake!
Tresham. Ha ha, what should I
Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,
How must one rouse his ire? A blow?—that 's pride
No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does one not?
Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits
Into his face! Come! Which, or all of these?
Mertoun. 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Heaven be judge!
Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!
[*He draws and, after a few passes, falls.*
Tresham. You are not hurt?
Mertoun. You 'll hear me now!
Tresham. But rise!
Mertoun. Ah, Tresham, say I not "you 'll hear me now!"
And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow man,
But—I suppose—the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence?
Tresham. Not hurt? It cannot be!

You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not have returned
My thrusts? Hurt where?
Mertoun. My lord—
Tresham. How young he is!
Mertoun. Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet
I have entangled other lives with mine.
Do let me speak, and do believe my speech!
That when I die before you presently,—
Tresham. Can you stay here till I return with help?
Mertoun. Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy
I did you grievous wrong and knew it not—
Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known,
I could not find what seemed a better way
To right you than I took: my life—you feel
How less than nothing were the giving you
The life you 've taken! But I thought my way
The better—only for your sake and hers:
And as you have decided otherwise,
Would I had an infinity of lives
To offer you! Now say—instruct me—think!
Can you, from the brief minutes I have left,
Eke out my reparation? Oh think—think!
For I must wring a partial—dare I say,
Forgiveness from you, ere I die?
Tresham. I do
Forgive you.
Mertoun. Wait and ponder that great word!
Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope
To speak to you of—Mildred!
Tresham. Mertoun, haste
And anger have undone us. 'T is not you
Should tell me for a novelty you 're young,

Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.
Be but your pardon ample as my own!
Mertoun. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop
Of blood or two, should bring all this about!
Why, 't was my very fear of you, my love
Of you—(what passion like a boy's for one
Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed of you—
You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
To knit myself to you: but I was young,
And your surpassing reputation kept me
So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?
With less of love, my glorious yesterday
Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,
Had taken place perchance six months ago.
Even now, how happy we had been! And yet
I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!
Let me look up into your face; I feel
'T is changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.
Where? where?
[*As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.*
Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
That 's bleeding fast away! I 'll live—must live,
There, if you 'll only turn me I shall live
And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but heard!
Had you but heard! What right was yours to set
The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,
And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,
"All had gone otherwise"? We 've sinned and die:
Never you sin, Lord Tresham! for you 'll die,
And God will judge you.

Tresham. Yes, be satisfied!
That process is begun.
Mertoun. And she sits there
Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her—
You, not another—say, I saw him die
As he breathed this, "I love her"—you don't know
What those three small words mean! Say, loving her
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,
Who had no pity, will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,
Dear Mildred! 't is so easy, and you 'll 'scape
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
Done to you?—heartless men shall have my heart,
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
Aware, perhaps, of every blow—oh God!—
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred! Leave
Their honourable world to them! For God
We 're good enough, though the world casts us out.
[*A whistle is heard.*
Tresham. Ho, Gerard!

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN *and* GUENDOLEN, *with lights*

No one speak! You see what 's done.
I cannot bear another voice.
Mertoun. There 's light—
Light all about me, and I move to it.
Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not
Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred?
Tresham. I will bear those words to her.
Mertoun. Now?

Tresham. Now. Lift you the body, and leave me
The head.
[*As they have half raised* MERTOUN, *he turns suddenly.*
Mertoun. I knew they turned me: turn me not from her!
There! stay you! there! [*Dies.*
Guendolen [*after a pause*]. Austin, remain you here
With Thorold until Gerard comes with help:
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
To Mildred.
Tresham. Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter. Did you hear him bid me give
His message? Did you hear my promise? I,
And only I, see Mildred.
Guendolen. She will die.
Tresham. Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope
She 'll die. What ground have you to think she 'll die?
Why, Austin 's with you!
Austin. Had we but arrived
Before you fought!
Tresham. There was no fight at all.
He let me slaughter him—the boy! I 'll trust
The body there to you and Gerard—thus!
Now bear him on before me.
Austin. Whither bear him?
Tresham. Oh, to my chamber! When we meet there next,
We shall be friends.
[*They bear out the body of* MERTOUN.
Will she die, Guendolen?
Guendolen. Where are you taking me?
Tresham. He fell just here.

Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
—You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm
Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?
But will you ever so forget his breast
As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That 's well!
You turn your head: and I then?—
Guendolen. What is done
Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold,
Bear up against this burden: more remains
To set the neck to!
Tresham. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!
What have I done that, like some fabled crime
Of yore, lets loose a Fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise!
Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell—farewell!

SCENE II.—MILDRED'S *chamber*. MILDRED *alone*

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed
Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn

Oh, 't is not so with me! The first woe fell,
And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else should I bear that Henry comes not?—fails
Just this first night out of so many nights?
Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,
As so few hours since, on that seat, we 'd love
No more—contrive no thousand happy ways
To hide love from the loveless, any more.
I think I might have urged some little point
In my defence, to Thorold; he was breathless
For the least hint of a defence: but no,
The first shame over, all that would might fall.
No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think
The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept
Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'T is she,
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world
Forsakes me: only Henry 's left me—left?
When I have lost him, for he does not come,
And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven, break up
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
By any means or any messenger!
Tresham [*without*]. Mildred!
Mildred. Come in! Heaven hears me!
[*Enter* TRESHAM]. You? alone?
Oh, no more cursing!
Tresham. Mildred, I must sit.
There—you sit!
Mildred. Say it, Thorold—do not look
The curse! deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh, speak that thought
Which makes your brow and cheeks so pale!
Tresham. My thought?
Mildred. All of it!
Tresham. How we waded—years ago—

After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us; and you dared
Neither advance nor turn back: so, we stood
Laughing and crying until Gerard came—
Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,
For once more reaching the relinquished prize!
How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying men's!
Mildred,—

Mildred. You call me kindlier by my name
Than even yesterday: what is in that?

Tresham. It weighs so much upon my mind that I
This morning took an office not my own!
I might . . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,
Content or not, at every little thing
That touches you. I may with a wrung heart
Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more:
Will you forgive me?

Mildred. Thorold? do you mock?
Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word!

Tresham. Forgive me, Mildred!—are you silent,
Sweet?

Mildred [*starting up*]. Why does not Henry
Mertoun come to-night?
Are you, too, silent?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard, which is empty.*

Ah, this speaks for you!
You 've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!
What is it I must pardon? This and all?
Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.
Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

Tresham. He bade me tell you . . .

Mildred. What I do forbid
Your utterance of! So much that you may tell
And will not—how you murdered him . . . but, no!
You 'll tell me that he loved me, never more

Than bleeding out his life there: must I say
"Indeed," to that? Enough! I pardon you.
Tresham. You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh
words, yes:
Of this last deed Another 's judge: whose doom
I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.
Mildred. Oh, true! There 's nought for me to
pardon! True!
You loose my soul of all its cares at once.
Death makes me sure of him for ever! You
Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,
And take my answer—not in words, but reading
Himself the heart I had to read him late,
Which death . . .
Tresham. Death? You are dying too? Well said
Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you 'd die:
But she was sure of it.
Mildred. Tell Guendolen
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .
Tresham. Him you loved:
And me?
Mildred. Ah, Thorold! Was 't not rashly done
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me—whom you loved too, and yet
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly
You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech
—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
And respite me!—you let him try to give
The story of our love and ignorance,
And the brief madness and the long despair—
You let him plead all this, because your code
Of honour bids you hear before you strike:
But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes—you struck him down!
Tresham. No! No!

Had I but heard him—had I let him speak
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him
I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
The story ere he told it: I saw through
The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immovable,
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath;
I would not glance: my punishment 's at hand.
There, Mildred, is the truth! and you—say on—
You curse me?

Mildred. As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls!
[*Falls on his neck.*
There! Do not think too much upon the past!
The cloud that 's broke was all the same a cloud
While it stood up between my friend and you;
You hurt him 'neath its shadow: but is that
So past retrieve? I have his heart, you know;
I may dispose of it: I give it you!
It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry!
[*Dies.*

Tresham. I wish thee joy, Beloved! I am glad
In thy full gladness!

Guendolen [*without*]. Mildred! Tresham!
[*Entering with* AUSTIN.] Thorold,
I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!
That 's well.

Tresham. Oh, better far than that!

Guendolen. She 's dead!
Let me unlock her arms!

Tresham. She threw them thus
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died :
You 'll let them stay now, Guendolen !
Austin. Leave her
And look to him ! What ails you, Thorold ?
Guendolen. White
As she, and whiter ! Austin ! quick—this side !
Austin. A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth ;
Both lips, where they 're not bitten through, are black :
Speak, dearest Thorold !
Tresham. Something does weigh down
My neck beside her weight : thanks : I should fall
But for you, Austin, I believe !—there, there,
'T will pass away soon !—ah,—I had forgotten :
I am dying.
Guendolen. Thorold—Thorold—why was this ?
Tresham. I said, just as I drank the poison off,
The earth would be no longer earth to me,
The life out of all life was gone from me.
There are blind ways provided, the foredone
Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile
By the conspicuous portal : I am through—
Just through !
Guendolen. Don't leave him, Austin ! Death is close.
Tresham. Already Mildred's face is peacefuller.
I see you, Austin—feel you : here 's my hand,
Put yours in it—you, Guendolen, yours too !
You 're lord and lady now—you 're Treshams ; name
And fame are yours : you hold our 'scutcheon up.
Austin, no blot on it ! You see how blood
Must wash one blot away : the first blot came

And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye
All 's gules again : no care to the vain world,
From whence the red was drawn !
Austin. No blot shall come !
Tresham. I said that : yet it did come. Should it come,
Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me !
[*Dies.*
Guendolen [*letting fall the pulseless arm*]. Ah, Thorold, we can but—remember you !

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

A PLAY

Ivy and violet, what do ye here
With blossom and shoot in the warm spring-weather,
Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere?—HANMER.

NO ONE LOVES AND HONOURS BARRY CORNWALL MORE THAN
DOES ROBERT BROWNING;
WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY TO
GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT,
MUST SAY SO.

LONDON: 1844.

PERSONS

COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves
SABYNE, ADOLF, *her attendants*
GUIBERT, GAUCELME, MAUFROY, CLUGNET, *courtiers*
VALENCE, *advocate of Cleves*
Prince BERTHOLD, *claimant of the Duchy*
MELCHIOR, *his confidant*

PLACE —*The Palace at Juliers*

TIME, 16—

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

1844

ACT I

MORNING

SCENE.—*A corridor leading to the Audience-chamber*

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY *and other* Courtiers, *round* GUIBERT, *who is silently reading a paper: as he drops it at the end—*

Guibert. That this should be her birthday; and the day
We all invested her, twelve months ago,
As the late Duke's true heiress and our liege;
And that this also must become the day . . .
Oh, miserable lady!
1st Courtier. Ay, indeed?
2nd Courtier. Well, Guibert?
3rd Courtier. But your news, my friend, your news!
The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Berthold's pleasure,
The better for us all: how writes the Prince?
Give me! I 'll read it for the common good.
Guibert. In time, sir,—but till time comes, pardon me!
Our old Duke just disclosed his child's retreat,
Declared her true succession to his rule,

And died : this birthday was the day, last year,
We convoyed her from Castle Ravestein—
That sleeps out trustfully its extreme age
On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she lived queen
Over the water-buds,—to Juliers' court
With joy and bustle. Here again we stand ;
Sir Gaucelme's buckle 's constant to his cap :
To-day 's much such another sunny day !

Gaucelme. Come, Guibert, this outgrows a jest,
I think !
You 're hardly such a novice as to need
The lesson, you pretend.

Guibert. What lesson, sir ?
That everybody, if he 'd thrive at court,
Should, first and last of all, look to himself ?
Why, no : and therefore with your good example,
(—Ho, Master Adolf !)—to myself I 'll look.

Enter ADOLF

Guibert. The Prince's letter ; why, of all men
else,
Comes it to me ?

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
Sir Guibert ! 'T was the Prince's express charge,
His envoy told us, that the missive there
Should only reach our lady by the hand
Of whosoever held your place.

Guibert. Enough !
[ADOLF *retires.*
Then, gentles, who 'll accept a certain poor
Indifferently honourable place,
My friends, I make no doubt, have gnashed their
teeth
At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,
To find me never in the mood to quit ?
Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and—

This to present our lady. Who 'll accept?
You,—you,—you? There it lies, and may, for me!
Maufroy [*a youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud*].
"Prince Berthold, proved by titles following
"Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day
"To claim his own, with licence from the Pope,
"The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and France" . . .
Gaucelme. Sufficient "titles following," I judge!
Don't read another! Well,—"to claim his own?"
Maufroy. "—And take possession of the Duchy held
"Since twelve months, to the true heir's prejudice,
"By" . . . Colombe, Juliers' mistress, so she thinks,
And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find.
Who wants the place and paper? Guibert 's right.
I hope to climb a little in the world,—
I 'd push my fortunes,—but, no more than he,
Could tell her on this happy day of days,
That, save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,
There 's nothing left to call her own. Sir Clugnet,
You famish for promotion; what say you?
Clugnet [*an old man*]. To give this letter were a sort, I take it,
Of service: services ask recompense:
What kind of corner may be Ravestein?
Guibert. The castle? Oh, you 'd share her fortunes? Good!
Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,
With no such bad remainder of a roof.
Clugnet. Oh,—but the town?
Guibert. Five houses, fifteen huts;
A church whereto was once a spire, 't is judged;
And half a dyke, except in time of thaw.
Clugnet. Still, there 's some revenue?

Guibert. Else Heaven forfend!
You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase;
So, when the Autumn floats of pine-wood steer
Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you,
Their grateful raftsman flings a guilder in;
—That 's if he mean to pass your way next time.
Clugnet. If not?
Guibert. Hang guilders, then! He blesses you.
Clugnet. What man do you suppose me? Keep your paper!
And, let me say, it shows no handsome spirit
To dally with misfortune: keep your place!
Gaucelme. Some one must tell her.
Guibert. Some one may: you may!
Gaucelme. Sir Guibert, 't is no trifle turns me sick
Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
But this goes near it. Where 's there news at all?
Who 'll have the face, for instance, to affirm
He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,
That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law;
That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,
And, she away, indisputable heir,
Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,
Claimed Juliers?—nor, as he preferred his claim,
That first this, then another potentate,
Inclined to its allowance?—I or you,
Or any one except the lady's self?
Oh, it had been the direst cruelty
To break the business to her! Things might change:
At all events, we 'd see next masque at end,
Next mummery over first: and so the edge
Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,
Till here 's the Prince upon us, and there 's she
—Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,
With just the faintest notion possible
That some such claimant earns a livelihood

About the world, by feigning grievances—
Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,
And fewer listen to, a second time.
Your method proves a failure; now try mine!
And, since this must be carried . . .
Guibert [*snatching the paper from him*]. By your leave!
Your zeal transports you! 'T will not serve the Prince
So much as you expect, this course you 'd take.
If she leaves quietly her palace,—well;
But if she died upon its threshold,—no:
He 'd have the trouble of removing her.
Come, gentles, we 're all—what the devil knows!
You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside:
You broke your father's heart superiorly
To gather his succession—never blush!
You 're from my province, and, be comforted,
They tell of it with wonder to this day.
You can afford to let your talent sleep.
We 'll take the very worst supposed, as true:
There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child
Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,
With whom the right lay! Call the Prince our Duke!
There, she 's no Duchess, she 's no anything
More than a young maid with the bluest eyes:
And now, sirs, we 'll not break this young maid's heart
Coolly as Gaucelme could and would! No haste!
His talent 's full-blown, ours but in the bud:
We 'll not advance to his perfection yet—
Will we, Sir Maufroy? See, I 've ruined Maufroy
For ever as a courtier!
Gaucelme. Here 's a coil!
And, count us, will you? Count its residue,

This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd!
A birthday, too, a gratulation day!
I 'm dumb: bid that keep silence!
Maufroy and others. Eh, Sir Guibert?
He 's right: that does say something: that 's bare truth.
Ten—twelve, I make: a perilous dropping off!
Guibert. Pooh—is it audience hour? The vestibule
Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort
That want our privilege of entry here.
Gaucelme. Adolf! [*Re-enter* ADOLF.] Who' s outside?
Guibert. Oh, your looks suffice!
Nobody waiting?
Maufroy [*looking through the door-folds*]. Scarce our number!
Guibert. 'Sdeath!
Nothing to beg for, to complain about?
It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast
As thus to frighten all the world!
Gaucelme. The world
Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me
By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,
Wherever warmth 's perpetual: outside 's free
To every wind from every compass-point,
And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.
The Prince comes and the lady's People go;
The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee—
Why should they wait for winter-time? 'T is instinct.
Don't you feel somewhat chilly?
Guibert. That 's their craft?
And last year's crowders-round and criers-forth
That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,
Lighted the bonfires, sang the loyal songs!

Well 't is my comfort, you could never call me
The People's Friend! The People keep their word—
I keep my place: don't doubt I 'll entertain
The People when the Prince comes, and the People
Are talked of! Then, their speeches—no one tongue
Found respite, not a pen had holiday
—For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves!
Now see: we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,
They wince and fret enough, but pay they must
—We manage that,—so, pay with a good grace
They might as well, it costs so little more.
But when we 've done with taxes, meet folk next
Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,
In public—there they have us if they will,
We 're at their mercy after that, you see!
For one tax not ten devils could extort—
Over and above necessity, a grace;
This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit—
Their vine-leaf wrappage of our tribute penny,
And crowding attestation, all works well.
Yet this precisely do they thrust on us!
These cappings quick, these crook-and-cringings low,
Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,
With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the mouth—
So tender they their love; and, tender made,
Go home to curse us, the first doit we ask.
As if their souls were any longer theirs!
As if they had not given ample warrant
To who should clap a collar on their neck,
Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,
And take them for the brute they boast themselves!
Stay—there 's a bustle at the outer door—

And somebody entreating . . . that 's my name!
Adolf,—I heard my name!
Adolf. 'T was probably
The suitor.
Guibert. Oh, there is one?
Adolf. With a suit
He 'd fain enforce in person.
Guibert. The good heart
—And the great fool! Just ope the mid-door's fold!
Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see?
Adolf. If it bear plenteous sign of travel . . . ay,
The very cloak my comrades tore!
Guibert. Why tore?
Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in that trim:
Since daybreak, was he posted hereabouts
Lest he should miss the moment.
Guibert. Where 's he now?
Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not more:
They have ado enough to thrust him back.
Guibert. Ay—but my name, I caught?
Adolf. Oh, sir—he said
—What was it?—You had known him formerly,
And, he believed, would help him did you guess
He waited now; you promised him as much:
The old plea! 'Faith, he 's back,—renews the charge!
[*Speaking at the door.*] So long as the man parleys, peace outside—
Nor be too ready with your halberts, there!
Gaucelme. My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path
A thin sour man, not unlike somebody.
Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast, whereon
He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow
At each repulse—

Gauceline. I noticed he 'd a brow.
Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile
Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,
And presently turns round, quiet again,
With some new pretext for admittance.—Back!
[*To* GUIBERT.]—Sir, he has seen you! Now cross halberts! Ha—
Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian too!
No passage! Whither would the madman press?
Close the doors quick on me!
Guibert. Too late! He 's here.

Enter, hastily and with discomposed dress, VALENCE

Valence. Sir Guibert, will you help me?—me, that come
Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,
To represent their heights and depths of woe
Before our Duchess and obtain relief!
Such errands barricade such doors, it seems:
But not a common hindrance drives me back
On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit
With hope for the first time, which sent me forth.
Cleves, speak for me! Cleves' men and women, speak!
Who followed me—your strongest—many a mile
That I might go the fresher from their ranks,
—Who sit—your weakest—by the city gates,
To take me fuller of what news I bring
As I return—for I must needs return!
—Can I? 'T were hard, no listener for their wrongs,
To turn them back upon the old despair—
Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus—
So, I do—any way you please—implore!

If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves?
Yet they of Cleves remember you so well!
Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,
Your words and deeds caught up at second hand,—
Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,
O' the very levity and recklessness
Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.
Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women starve,
Is Cleves forgotten? Then, remember me!
You promised me that you would help me once,
For other purpose: will you keep your word?
Guibert. And who may you be, friend?
Valence. Valence of Cleves.
Guibert. Valence of . . . not the advocate of Cleves,
I owed my whole estate to, three years back?
Ay, well may you keep silence! Why, my lords,
You 've heard, I 'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,
I was so nearly ousted of my land
By some knave's pretext—(eh? when you refused me
Your ugly daughter, Clugnet!)—and you 've heard
How I recovered it by miracle
—(When I refused her!) Here 's the very friend,
—Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!
Nay, Valence, this procedure 's vile in you!
I 'm no more grateful than a courtier should,
But politic am I—I bear a brain,
Can cast about a little, might require
Your services a second time. I tried
To tempt you with advancement here to court
—"No!"—well, for curiosity at least
To view our life here—"No!"—our Duchess, then,—
A pretty woman 's worth some pains to see,

Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown
Complete the forehead pale and tresses pure . . .
Valence. Our city trusted me its miseries,
And I am come.
Guibert. So much for taste! But "come,"—
So may you be, for anything I know,
To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's daughter,
And with an equal chance you get all three.
If it was ever worth your while to come,
Was not the proper way worth finding too?
Valence. Straight to the palace-portal, sir, I came—
Guibert. —And said?—
Valence. —That I had brought the miseries
Of a whole city to relieve.
Guibert. —Which saying
Won your admittance? You saw me, indeed,
And here, no doubt, you stand: as certainly,
My intervention, I shall not dispute,
Procures you audience; which, if I procure,—
That paper 's closely written—by Saint Paul,
Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,
Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B and C!
Perhaps you 'd enter, make a reverence,
And launch these "miseries" from first to last?
Valence. How should they let me pause or turn aside?
Gaucelme [*to* VALENCE]. My worthy sir, one question! You 've come straight
From Cleves, you tell us: heard you any talk
At Cleves about our lady?
Valence. Much.
Gaucelme. And what?
Valence. Her wish was to redress all wrongs she knew.
Gaucelme. That, you believed?

Valence. You see me, sir!
Gaucelme. —Nor stopped
Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers here,
For any—rumours you might find afloat?
Valence. I had my townsmen's wrongs to busy me.
Gaucelme. This is the lady's birthday, do you know?
—Her day of pleasure?
Valence. —That the great, I know,
For pleasure born, should still be on the watch
To exclude pleasure when a duty offers:
Even as, for duty born, the lowly too
May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach:
Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir!
Gaucelme [*aside to* GUIBERT]. Sir Guibert, here 's your man! No scruples now—
You 'll never find his like! Time presses hard.
I 've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,
But you can't keep the hour of audience back
Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.
[*Pointing to* VALENCE.] Entrust him with it—fool no chance away!
Guibert. Him?
Gaucelme. —With the missive! What 's the man to her?
Guibert. No bad thought! Yet, 't is yours, who ever played
The tempting serpent: else 't were no bad thought!
I should—and do—mistrust it for your sake,
Or else . . .

Enter an Official *who communicates with* ADOLF

Adolf. The Duchess will receive the court.
Guibert. Give us a moment, Adolf! Valence, friend,
I 'll help you. We of the service, you 're to mark,

Have special entry, while the herd . . . the folk
Outside, get access through our help alone;
—Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose
So ever will be: your natural lot is, therefore,
To wait your turn and opportunity,
And probably miss both. Now, I engage
To set you, here and in a minute's space,
Before the lady, with full leave to plead
Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,
To heart's content.
Valence. I grieve that I must ask,—
This being, yourself admit, the custom here,—
To what the price of such a favour mounts?
Guibert. Just so! You 're not without a courtier's tact.
Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,
Do such as we without a recompense.
Valence. Yours is?—
Guibert. A trifle: here 's a document
'T is some one's duty to present her Grace—
I say, not mine—these say, not theirs—such points
Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all
And take it? Just say, "I am bidden lay
"This paper at the Duchess' feet!"
Valence. No more?
I thank you, sir!
Adolf. Her Grace receives the court.
Guibert [*aside*]. Now, *sursum corda*, quoth the mass-priest! Do—
Whoever 's my kind saint, do let alone
These pushings to and fro, and pullings back;
Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm
The downward path, if you can't pluck me off
Completely! Let me live quite his, or yours!
[*The* Courtiers *begin to range themselves, and move toward the door.*

After me, Valence! So, our famous Cleves
Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants buy their lace?
And dear enough—it beggars me, I know,
To keep my very gloves fringed properly.
This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you cross;
Yon grey urn 's veritable marcasite,
The Pope's gift: and those salvers testify
The Emperor. Presently you 'll set your foot
. . . But you don't speak, friend Valence!
Valence. I shall speak.
Gaucelme [*aside to* GUIBERT]. Guibert—it were no such ungraceful thing
If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck
With the bad news. Look here, what you shall do.
Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and cry
"Yield strangers our allegiance? First I 'll perish
"Beside your Grace!"—and so give me the cue
To . . .
Guibert. —Clap your hand to note-book and jot down
That to regale the Prince with? I conceive.
[*To* VALENCE.] Do, Valence, speak, or I shall half suspect
You 're plotting to supplant us, me the first,
I' the lady's favour! Is 't the grand harangue
You mean to make, that thus engrosses you?
—Which of her virtues you 'll apostrophize?
Or is 't the fashion you aspire to start,
Of that close-curled, not unbecoming hair?
Or what else ponder you?
Valence. My townsmen's wrongs.

ACT II

NOON

SCENE—*The presence-chamber*

The DUCHESS *and* SABYNE

The Duchess. Announce that I am ready for the court!
Sabyne. 'T is scarcely audience-hour, I think; your Grace
May best consult your own relief, no doubt,
And shun the crowd: but few can have arrived.
The Duchess. Let those not yet arrived, then, keep away!
'T was me, this day last year at Ravestein,
You hurried. It has been full time, beside,
This half-hour. Do you hesitate?
Sabyne. Forgive me!
The Duchess. Stay, Sabyne; let me hasten to make sure
Of one true thanker: here with you begins
My audience, claim you first its privilege!
It is my birth's event they celebrate:
You need not wish me more such happy days,
But—ask some favour! Have you none to ask?
Has Adolf none, then? this was far from least
Of much I waited for impatiently,
Assure yourself! It seemed so natural
Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,

Should be the power and leave of doing good
To you, and greater pleasure to myself.
You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf?
The rest is my concern.
Sabyne. Your Grace is ever
Our lady of dear Ravestein,—but, for Adolf . . .
The Duchess. "But"? You have not, sure, changed in your regard
And purpose towards him?
Sabyne. We change?
The Duchess. Well then? Well?
Sabyne. How could we two be happy, and, most like,
Leave Juliers, when—when . . . but 't is audience-time!
The Duchess. "When, if you left me, I were left indeed!"
Would you subjoin that?—Bid the court approach!
—Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne?
Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,
If friends detain me, and get blame for it,
There is a cause? Of last year's fervid throng
Scarce one half comes now.
Sabyne [*aside*]. One half? No, alas!
The Duchess. So can the mere suspicion of a cloud
Over my fortunes, strike each loyal heart.
They 've heard of this Prince Berthold; and, forsooth,
Some foolish arrogant pretence he makes,
May grow more foolish and more arrogant,
They please to apprehend! I thank their love.
Admit them!
Sabyne [*aside*]. How much has she really learned?
The Duchess. Surely, whoever 's absent, Tristan waits?

—Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised
From nothing—come, he 's faithful to me, come!
(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—yes,
The fitter to comport myself aright)
Not Romuald? Xavier—what said he to that?
For Xavier hates a parasite, I know!
[SABYNE *goes out.*
The Duchess. Well, sunshine 's everywhere,
and summer too.
Next year 't is the old place again, perhaps—
The water-breeze again, the birds again.
—It cannot be! It is too late to be!
What part had I, or choice in all of it?
Hither they brought me; I had not to think
Nor care, concern myself with doing good
Or ill, my task was just—to live,—to live,
And, answering ends there was no need explain,
To render Juliers happy—so they said.
All could not have been falsehood: some was love,
And wonder and obedience. I did all
They looked for: why then cease to do it now?
Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
And—ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,
Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .
It cannot nor it shall not be! His right?
Well then, he has the right, and I have not,
—But who bade all of you surround my life
And close its growth up with your ducal crown
Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?
I could have been like one of you,—loved, hoped,
Feared, lived and died like one of you—but you
Would take that life away and give me this,
And I will keep this! I will face you! Come!

Enter the Courtiers *and* VALENCE

The Courtiers. Many such happy mornings to your Grace!

The Duchess [*aside, as they pay their devoir*]. The same words, the same faces,—the same love!
I have been overfearful. These are few;
But these, at least, stand firmly: these are mine.
As many come as may; and if no more,
'T is that these few suffice—they do suffice!
What succour may not next year bring me? Plainly,
I feared too soon. [*To the* Courtiers.] I thank you, sirs: all thanks!

Valence [*aside, as the* DUCHESS *passes from one group to another, conversing*]. 'T is she—the vision this day last year brought,
When, for a golden moment at our Cleves,
She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves
Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke
—Not that she could have noted the recluse
—Ungainly, old before his time—who gazed.
Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that gaze
Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own!
She was above it—but so would not sink
My gaze to earth! The People caught it, hers—
Thenceforward, mine; but thus entirely mine,
Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul
Ere she retired and left me—them? She turns—
There's all her wondrous face at once! The ground
Reels and . . . [*suddenly occupying himself with his paper*]
These wrongs of theirs I have to plead!

The Duchess [*to the* Courtiers]. Nay, compliment enough! and kindness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such years.
'T was fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,
I tasted life's pure pleasure—one such, pure,
Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth 's for pleasure:
Mine is received; let my age pay for it.
Gaucelme. So, pay, and pleasure paid for, thinks your Grace,
Should never go together?
Guibert. How, Sir Gaucelme?
Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly
At the snatched breathing-intervals of work?
As good you saved it till the dull day's-end
When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone.
Eat first, then work upon the strength of food!
The Duchess. True: you enable me to risk my future,
By giving me a past beyond recall.
I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year:
Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now!
And so,—what news, Sir Guibert, spoke you of?
[*As they advance a little, and* GUIBERT *speaks*—
—That gentleman?
Valence [*aside*]. I feel her eyes on me.
Guibert [*to* VALENCE]. The Duchess, sir, inclines to hear your suit.
Advance! He is from Cleves.
Valence [*coming forward. Aside*]. Their wrongs—their wrongs!
The Duchess. And you, sir, are from Cleves? How fresh in mind,
The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves!
She entertained me bravely, but the best
Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by
With insuppressive joy on every face!
What says my ancient famous happy Cleves?

Valence. Take the truth, lady—you are made for truth!
So think my friends: nor do they less deserve
The having you to take it, you shall think,
When you know all—nay, when you only know
How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,
When the poor acquiescing multitude
Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart
Into unnoticed corners, that the few,
Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,
Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight
With joyous faces fit to bear away
And boast of as a sample of all Cleves
—How, when to daylight these crept out once more,
Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags
Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought bread,
That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece,
And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them
To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path
—How, when the golden flood of music and bliss
Ebbed, as their moon retreated, and again
Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare
—Then I, their friend, had only to suggest
"Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp!"
And as one man they cried "He speaks the truth:
"Show her the horror! Take from our own mouths
"Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too!"
This they cried, lady! I have brought the wrongs.
The Duchess. Wrongs? Cleves has wrongs—apparent now and thus?
I thank you! In that paper? Give it me!
Valence. (There, Cleves!) In this! (What did I promise, Cleves?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced
Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon! I forget
I buy the privilege of this approach,
And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay
This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet.
[*Presenting* GUIBERT'S *paper.*
Guibert. Stay! for the present . . .
The Duchess. Stay, sir? I take aught
That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride
Than this your ducal circlet. Thank you, sir!
[*The* DUCHESS *reads hastily; then, turning to the* Courtiers—
What have I done to you? Your deed or mine
Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself
No more a title to your homage, no,
Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote the words
In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.
For such a flower, you plucked me; well, you erred—
Well, 't was a weed; remove the eye-sore quick!
But should you not remember it has lain
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things?
—That if 't be faded 't is with prayer's sole breath—
That the one day it boasted was God's day?
Still, I do thank you! Had you used respect,
Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,
Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet
May yield some wandering insect rest and food:
So, fling me forth, and—all is best for all!
[*After a pause.*] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers' Duke it seems—
The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's—

Be mine, too! Take this People! Tell not me
Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,
—But take them, from a heart that yearns to give!
Find out their love,—I could not; find their fear,—
I would not; find their like,—I never shall,
Among the flowers! [*Taking off her coronet.*
Colombe of Ravestein
Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here!
Valence [*advancing to* GUIBERT]. Sir Guibert,
knight, they call you—this of mine
Is the first step I ever set at court.
You dared make me your instrument, I find;
For that, so sure as you and I are men,
We reckon to the utmost presently:
But as you are a courtier and I none,
Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,
Have too far outraged, by my ignorance
Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed
A second step and risk addressing her:
—I am degraded—you let me address!
Out of her presence, all is plain enough
What I shall do—but in her presence, too,
Surely there 's something proper to be done.
[*To the others.*] You, gentles, tell me if I guess
aright—
May I not strike this man to earth?
The Courtiers [*as* GUIBERT *springs forward, withholding him*]. Let go!
—The clothiers' spokesman, Guibert? Grace a
churl?
The Duchess [*to* VALENCE]. Oh, be acquainted
with your party, sir!
He 's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts;
A lion crests him for a cognizance;
"Scorning to waver"—that 's his 'scutcheon's
word;

His office with the new Duke—probably
The same in honour as with me; or more,
By so much as this gallant turn deserves.
He 's now, I dare say, of a thousand times
The rank and influence that remain with her
Whose part you take! So, lest for taking it
You suffer . . .
Valence. I may strike him then to earth?
Guibert [*falling on his knee*]. Great and dear lady, pardon me! Hear once!
Believe me and be merciful—be just!
I could not bring myself to give that paper
Without a keener pang than I dared meet
—And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy here
—No one dared meet it. Protestation 's cheap,—
But, if to die for you did any good,
[*To* GAUCELME.] Would not I die, sir? Say your worst of me!
But it does no good, that 's the mournful truth.
And since the hint of a resistance, even,
Would just precipitate, on you the first,
A speedier ruin—I shall not deny,
Saving myself indubitable pain,
I thought to give you pleasure (who might say?)
By showing that your only subject found
To carry the sad notice, was the man
Precisely ignorant of its contents;
A nameless, mere provincial advocate;
One whom 't was like you never saw before,
Never would see again. All has gone wrong;
But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust!
The Duchess. A nameless advocate, this gentleman?
—(I pardon you, Sir Guibert!)
Guibert [*rising, to* VALENCE]. Sir, and you?

Valence. —Rejoice that you are lightened of a load.
Now, you have only me to reckon with.
The Duchess. One I have never seen, much less obliged?
Valence. Dare I speak, lady?
The Duchess. Dare you! Heard you not
I rule no longer?
Valence. Lady, if your rule
Were based alone on such a ground as these
[*Pointing to the Courtiers.*
Could furnish you,—abjure it! They have hidden
A source of true dominion from your sight.
The Duchess. You hear them—no such source is left . . .
Valence. Hear Cleves!
Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this day,
Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,
Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure
Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,
Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.
What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour?
What makes—instead of rising, all as one,
And teaching fingers, so expert to wield
Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's trick,
—What makes that there 's an easier help, they think,
For you, whose name so few of them can spell,
Whose face scarce one in every hundred saw,—
You simply have to understand their wrongs,
And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades are plied,
And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here?
There is a vision in the heart of each
Of justice, mercy, wisdom, tenderness
To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure:
And these embodied in a woman's form

That best transmits them, pure as first received,
From God above her, to mankind below.
Will you derive your rule from such a ground,
Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,
Of this man—this—and this?
The Duchess [*after a pause*]. You come from Cleves:
How many are at Cleves of such a mind?
Valence [*from his paper*]. "We, all the manufacturers of Cleves—"
The Duchess. Or stay, sir—lest I seem too covetous—
Are you my subject? such as you describe,
Am I to you, though to no other man?
Valence [*from his paper*]. —"Valence, ordained your Advocate at Cleves"—
The Duchess [*replacing the coronet*]. Then I remain Cleves' Duchess! Take you note,
While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,
I stand her lady till she waves me off!
For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold;
Laugh at each menace; and, his power defying,
Return his missive with its due contempt!
[*Casting it away.*
Guibert [*picking it up*]. —Which to the Prince I will deliver, lady,
(Note it down, Gaucelme)—with your message too!
The Duchess. I think the office is a subject's, sir!
—Either . . . . how style you him?—my special guarder
The Marshal's—for who knows but violence
May follow the delivery?—Or, perhaps,
My Chancellor's—for law may be to urge
On its receipt!—Or, even my Chamberlain's—
For I may violate established form!

[*To* VALENCE.] Sir,—for the half-hour till this service ends,
Will you become all these to me?
Valence [*falling on his knee*]. My liege!
The Duchess. Give me!
[*The* Courtiers *present their badges of office.*
[*Putting them by.*] Whatever was their virtue once,
They need new consecration. [*Raising* VALENCE.]
Are you mine?
I will be Duchess yet! [*She retires.*
The Courtiers. Our Duchess yet!
A glorious lady! Worthy love and dread!
I 'll stand by her,—And I, whate'er betide!
Guibert [*to* VALENCE]. Well done, well done, sir! I care not who knows,
You have done nobly and I envy you—
Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think:
For when one gets a place like this I hold,
One gets too the remark that its mere wages,
The pay and the preferment, make our prize.
Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,
We 're laughed at—much would zeal and faith subsist
Without these also! Yet, let these be stopped,
Our wages discontinue,—then, indeed,
Our zeal and faith, (we hear on every side,)
Are not released—having been pledged away
I wonder, for what zeal and faith in turn?
Hard money purchased me my place! No, no—
I 'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,
If I had time and skill to argue it.
Therefore, I say, I 'll serve you, how you please—
If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—
(The kinder of me that, in sober truth,
I never dreamed I did you any harm) . . .

Gaucelme. —Or, kinder still, you 'll introduce,
no doubt,
His merits to the Prince who 's just at hand,
And let no hint drop he 's made Chancellor
And Chamberlain and Heaven knows what beside!
Clugnet [*to* VALENCE]. You stare, young sir, and
threaten! Let me say,
That at your age, when first I came to court,
I was not much above a gentleman;
While now . . .
Valence. —You are Head-Lackey? With
your office
I have not yet been graced, sir!
Other Courtiers [*to* CLUGNET]. Let him talk!
Fidelity, disinterestedness,
Excuse so much! Men claim my worship ever
Who staunchly and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF

Adolf. The Prince arrives.
Courtiers. Ha? How?
Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind
At Aix, and enters almost by himself.
1st Courtier. The Prince! This foolish business
puts all out.
2nd Courtier. Let Gaucelme speak first!
3rd Courtier. Better I began
About the state of Juliers: should one say
All 's prosperous and inviting him?
4th Courtier. —Or rather,
All 's prostrate and imploring him?
5th Courtier. That 's best!
Where 's the Cleves' paper, by the way?
4th Courtier [*to* VALENCE]. Sir—sir—
If you 'll but lend that paper—trust it me,
I 'll warrant . . .

5th Courtier. Softly, sir—the Marshal's duty!
Clugnet. Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first
By virtue of his patent?
Gaucelme. Patents?—Duties?
All that, my masters, must begin again!
One word composes the whole controversy:
We 're simply now—the Prince's!
The Others. Ay—the Prince's!

Enter SABYNE

Sabyne. Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony!
Where 's whom our lady calls her only subject?
She needs him. Who is here the Duchess's?
Valence [*starting from his reverie*]. Most gratefully I follow to her feet.

ACT III

AFTERNOON

SCENE.—*The Vestibule*

Enter Prince BERTHOLD *and* MELCHIOR

Berthold. A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.
[*Half-apart.*] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept Cologne:
Better try Aix, though!—
Melchior. Please 't your Highness speak?
Berthold [*as before*]. Aix, Cologne, Frankfort,
—Milan;—Rome!—
Melchior. The Grave.
More weary seems your Highness, I remark,
Than sundry conquerors whose path I 've watched
Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.
I could well wish you, for your proper sake,
Had met some shade of opposition here
—Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,
Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.
You must not look for next achievement's palm
So easily: this will hurt your conquering.
Berthold. My next? Ay, as you say, my next and next!
Well, I am tired, that 's truth, and moody too,
This quiet entrance-morning: listen why!
Our little burgh, now, Juliers—'t is indeed

One link, however insignificant,
Of the great chain by which I reach my hope,
—A link I must secure; but otherwise,
You 'd wonder I esteem it worth my grasp.
Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns!
It happens now—this very nook—to be
A place that once . . . not a long while since, neither—
When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on
Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,
Discarded by one kinsman, and the other
A poor priest merely,—then, I say, this place
Shone my ambition's object; to be Duke—
Seemed then, what to be Emperor seems now.
My rights were far from judged as plain and sure
In those days as of late, I promise you:
And 't was my day-dream, Lady Colombe here
Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,
Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace
(I was a boy!)—bestow her hand at length,
And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.
Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now.
Hearken: if ever I be Emperor,
Remind me what I felt and said to-day!

Melchior. All this consoles a bookish man like me.
—And so will weariness cling to you. Wrong,
Wrong! Had you sought the lady's court yourself,—
Faced the redoubtables composing it,
Flattered this, threatened that man, bribed the other,—
Pleaded by writ and word and deed, your cause,—
Conquered a footing inch by painful inch,—
And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last
On her for prize,—the right life had been lived,

And justice done to divers faculties
Shut in that brow. Yourself were visible
As you stood victor, then; whom now—(your pardon!)
I am forced narrowly to search and see,
So are you hid by helps—this Pope, your uncle—
Your cousin, the other King! You are a mind,—
They, body: too much of mere legs-and-arms
Obstructs the mind so! Match these with their like:
Match mind with mind!
Berthold. And where 's your mind to match?
They show me legs-and-arms to cope withal!
I 'd subjugate this city—where 's its mind?
[*The* Courtiers *enter slowly.*
Melchior. Got out of sight when you came troops and all!
And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-blood:
A smug œconomy of both, this first!
[*As* CLUGNET *bows obsequiously.*
Well done, gout, all considered!—I may go?
Berthold. Help me receive them!
Melchior. Oh, they just will say
What yesterday at Aix their fellows said—
At Treves, the day before! Sir Prince, my friend,
Why do you let your life slip thus?—Meantime,
I have my little Juliers to achieve—
The understanding this tough Platonist,
Your holy uncle disinterred, Amelius:
Lend me a company of horse and foot,
To help me through his tractate—gain my Duchy!
Berthold. And Empire, after that is gained, will be—?
Melchior. To help me through your uncle's comment, Prince! [*Goes.*
Berthold. Ah? Well: he o'er-refines—the scholar's fault!

How do I let my life slip? Say, this life,
I lead now, differs from the common life
Of other men in mere degree, not kind,
Of joys and griefs,—still there is such degree,
Mere largeness in a life is something, sure,—
Enough to care about and struggle for,
In this world: for this world, the size of things;
The sort of things, for that to come, no doubt.
A great is better than a little aim:
And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth
And failed so, under that grey convent-wall,
Was I more happy than I should be now
[*By this time, the* Courtiers *are ranged before him.*
If failing of my Empire? Not a whit.
—Here comes the mind, it once had tasked me sore
To baffle, but for my advantages!
All 's best as 't is: these scholars talk and talk.
[*Seats himself.*
The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to Juliers!
—to his heritage!
Our dutifullest service proffer we!
Clugnet. I, please your Highness, having exercised
The function of Grand Chamberlain at court,
With much acceptance, as men testify . . .
Berthold. I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen!
The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy founded
On strictest justice—you concede it, therefore,
I do not wonder: and the kings my friends
Protest they mean to see such claim enforced,—
You easily may offer to assist.
But there 's a slight discretionary power
To serve me in the matter, you 've had long,

Though late you use it. This is well to say—
But could you not have said it months ago?
I 'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon, true—
'T is flung me—I stoop down, and from the ground
Pick it, with all you placid standers-by:
And now I have it, gems and mire at once,
Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say!
Guibert. (By Paul, the advocate our doughty friend
Cuts the best figure!)
Gaucelme. If our ignorance
May have offended, sure our loyalty . . .
Berthold. Loyalty? Yours? Oh—of yourselves you speak!
I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope!
And since I have been forced repeat my claims
As if they never had been urged before,
As I began, so must I end, it seems.
The formal answer to the grave demand!
What says the lady?
Courtiers [*one to another*]. *1st Courtier.* Marshal!
2nd Courtier. Orator!
Guibert. A variation of our mistress' way!
Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet!—that, he waits!
1st Courtier. Your place!
2nd Courtier. Just now it was your own!
Guibert. The devil's!
Berthold [*to* GUIBERT]. Come forward, friend—you with the paper, there!
Is Juliers the first city I 've obtained?
By this time, I may boast proficiency
In each decorum of the circumstance.
Give it me as she gave it—the petition,
Demand, you style it! What 's required, in brief?
What title's reservation, appanage's
Allowance? I heard all at Treves, last week.

Gaucelme [*to* GUIBERT]. "Give it him as she gave it!"
Guibert. And why not?
[*To* BERTHOLD.] The lady crushed your summons thus together,
And bade me, with the very greatest scorn
So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .
Courtiers. Stop—
Idiot!
Guibert. —Inform you she denied your claim,
Defied yourself! (I tread upon his heel,
The blustering advocate!)
Berthold. By heaven and earth!
Dare you jest, sir?
Guibert. Did they at Treves, last week?
Berthold [*starting up*]. Why then, I look much bolder than I knew,
And you prove better actors than I thought:
Since, as I live, I took you as you entered
For just so many dearest friends of mine,
Fled from the sinking to the rising power
—The sneaking'st crew, in short, I e'er despised!
Whereas, I am alone here for the moment,
With every soldier left behind at Aix!
Silence? That means the worst? I thought as much!
What follows next then?
Courtiers. Gracious Prince, he raves!
Guibert. He asked the truth and why not get the truth?
Berthold. Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?
—But why stand paltering with imbeciles?
Let me see her, or . . .
Guibert. Her, without her leave,
Shall no one see: she 's Duchess yet!

Courtiers [*footsteps without, as they are disputing*].
Good chance!
She 's here—the Lady Colombe's self!
Berthold. 'T is well!
[*Aside.*] Array a handful thus against my world?
Not ill done, truly! Were not this a mind
To match one's mind with? Colombe! Let us wait!
I failed so, under that grey convent-wall!
She comes.
Guibert. The Duchess! Strangers, range yourselves!
[*As the* DUCHESS *enters in conversation with* VALENCE, BERTHOLD *and the* Courtiers *fall back a little.*
The Duchess. Presagefully it beats, presagefully,
My heart: the right is Berthold's and not mine.
Valence. Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust
Your power to acquiesce so patiently
As you believe, in such a dream-like change
Of fortune—change abrupt, profound, complete?
The Duchess. Ah, the first bitterness is over now!
Bitter I may have felt it to confront
The truth, and ascertain those natures' value
I had so counted on; that was a pang:
But I did bear it, and the worst is over.
Let the Prince take them!
Valence. And take Juliers too?
—Your people without crosses, wands and chains—
Only with hearts?
The Duchess. There I feel guilty, sir!
I cannot give up what I never had:
For I ruled these, not them—these stood between.
Shall I confess, sir? I have heard by stealth
Of Berthold from the first; more news and more:
Closer and closer swam the thundercloud,

But I was safely housed with these, I knew.
At times when to the casement I would turn,
At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,
I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge—
Yet I was sure some one of all these friends
Would interpose: I followed the bird's flight
Or plucked the flower: some one would interpose!
Valence. Not one thought on the People—and Cleves there!
The Duchess. Now, sadly conscious my real sway was missed,
Its shadow goes without so much regret:
Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,
Answer Prince Berthold!
Valence. Then you acquiesce?
The Duchess. Remember over whom it was I ruled!
Guibert [*stepping forward*]. Prince Berthold, yonder, craves an audience, lady!
The Duchess [*to* VALENCE]. I only have to turn, and I shall face
Prince Berthold! Oh, my very heart is sick!
It is the daughter of a line of Dukes
This scornful insolent adventurer
Will bid depart from my dead father's halls!
I shall not answer him—dispute with him—
But, as he bids, depart! Prevent it, sir!
Sir—but a mere day's respite! Urge for me
—What I shall call to mind I should have urged
When time 's gone by: 't will all be mine, you urge!
A day—an hour—that I myself may lay
My rule down! 'T is too sudden—must not be!
The world 's to hear of it! Once done—for ever!
How will it read, sir? How be sung about?
Prevent it!

Berthold [*approaching*]. Your frank indignation,
lady,
Cannot escape me. Overbold I seem ;
But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise
At this reception,—this defiance, rather.
And if, for their and your sake, I rejoice
Your virtues could inspire a trusty few
To make such gallant stand in your behalf,
I cannot but be sorry, for my own,
Your friends should force me to retrace my steps :
Since I no longer am permitted speak
After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed
No less by courtesy than relationship—
Which I remember, if you once forgot.
But never must attack pass unrepelled.
Suffer that, through you, I demand of these,
Who controverts my claim to Juliers?
The Duchess. —Me
You say, you do not speak to—
Berthold. Of your subjects
I ask, then : whom do you accredit? Where
Stand those should answer?
Valence [*advancing*]. The lady is alone.
Berthold. Alone, and thus? So weak and yet
so bold?
Valence. I said she was alone—
Berthold. And weak, I said.
Valence. When is man strong untilhe feels alone?
It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,
Created organs, such as those you seek,
By which to give its varied purpose shape :
And, naming the selected ministrants,
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—each, a
man !
That strength performed its work and passed its
way :

You see our lady: there, the old shapes stand!
—A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor—
"Be helped their way, into their death put life
"And find advantage!"—so you counsel us.
But let strength feel alone, seek help itself,—
And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts
The sea's breast out,—as, littered 'mid the waves
The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,
So turns our lady to her true resource,
Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,
—And I am first her instinct fastens on.
And prompt I say, as clear as heart can speak,
The People will not have you; nor shall have!
It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
And fight you to the last,—though that does much,
And men and children,—ay, and women too,
Fighting for home, are rather to be feared
Than mercenaries fighting for their pay—
But, say you beat us, since such things have been,
And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your foot
Upon a steaming bloody plash—what then?
Stand you the more our lord that there you stand?
Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate,
A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend—
Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,
A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood—
But never, in this gentle spot of earth,
Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,
For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,
We 'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil.
—Our conqueror? Yes!—Our despot? Yes!—Our Duke?
Know yourself, know us!

Berthold [*who has been in thought*]. Know your lady, also!

[*Very deferentially.*]—To whom I needs must exculpate myself
For having made a rash demand, at least.
Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be
Her chief adviser, I submit my claims,
[*Giving papers.*
But, this step taken, take no further step,
Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.
Here be our meeting-place; at night, its time:
Till when I humbly take the lady's leave!
[*He withdraws. As the* DUCHESS *turns to* VALENCE, *the* Courtiers *interchange glances and come forward a little.*
1st Courtier. So, this was their device!
2nd Courtier. No bad device!
3rd Courtier. You 'd say they love each other, Guibert's friend
From Cleves, and she, the Duchess!
4th Courtier. —And moreover,
That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help
Their loves!
5th Courtier. Pray, Guibert, what is next to do?
Guibert [*advancing*]. I laid my office at the Duchess' foot—
Others. And I—and I—and I!
The Duchess. I took them, sirs.
Guibert [*apart to* VALENCE]. And now, sir, I am simple knight again—
Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet
That never bore affront; whate'er your birth,—
As things stand now, I recognize yourself
(If you 'll accept experience of some date)
As like to be the leading man o' the time,
Therefore as much above me now, as I
Seemed above you this morning. Then, I offered

To fight you : will you be as generous
And now fight me?
Valence. Ask when my life is mine!
Guibert. ('T is hers now!)
Clugnet [*apart to* VALENCE, *as* GUIBERT *turns from him*]. You, sir, have insulted me
Grossly,—will grant me, too, the selfsame favour
You 've granted him, just now, I make no question?
Valence. I promise you, as him, sir.
Clugnet. Do you so?
Handsomely said! I hold you to it, sir.
You 'll get me reinstated in my office
As you will Guibert!
The Duchess. I would be alone!
[*They begin to retire slowly; as* VALENCE *is about to follow—*
Alone, sir—only with my heart: you stay!
Gaucelme. You hear that? Ah, light breaks upon me! Cleves—
It was at Cleves some man harangued us all—
With great effect,—so those who listened said,
My thoughts being busy elsewhere: was this he?
Guibert,—your strange, disinterested man!
Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend!
The modest worth you mean to patronize!
He cares about no Duchesses, not he—
His sole concern is with the wrongs of Cleves!
What, Guibert? What, it breaks on you at last?
Guibert. Would this hall's floor were a mine's roof! I 'd back
And in her very face . . .
Gaucelme. Apply the match
That fired the train,—and where would you be, pray?
Guibert. With him!
Gaucelme. Stand, rather, safe outside with me!

The mine 's charged: shall I furnish you the match
And place you properly? To the antechamber!
Guibert. Can you?
Gaucelme. Try me! Your friend 's in fortune!
Guibert. Quick—
To the antechamber! He is pale with bliss!
Gaucelme. No wonder! Mark her eyes!
Guibert. To the antechamber!
[*The* Courtiers *retire.*
The Duchess. Sir, could you know all you have done for me
You were content! You spoke, and I am saved.
Valence. Be not too sanguine, lady! Ere you dream,
That transient flush of generosity
Fades off, perchance. The man, beside, is gone,—
Him we might bend; but see, the papers here—
Inalterably his requirement stays,
And cold hard words have we to deal with now.
In that large eye there seemed a latent pride,
To self-denial not incompetent,
But very like to hold itself dispensed
From such a grace: however, let us hope!
He is a noble spirit in noble form.
I wish he less had bent that brow to smile
As with the fancy how he could subject
Himself upon occasion to—himself!
From rudeness, violence, you rest secure;
But do not think your Duchy rescued yet!
The Duchess. You,—who have opened a new world to me,
Will never take the faded language up
Of that I leave? My Duchy—keeping it,
Or losing it—is that my sole world now?
Valence. Ill have I spoken if you thence despise
Juliers; although the lowest, on true grounds,

Be worth more than the highest rule, on false :
Aspire to rule, on the true grounds !
The Duchess. Nay, hear—
False, I will never—rash, I would not be !
This is indeed my birthday—soul and body,
Its hours have done on me the work of years.
You hold the requisition : ponder it !
If I have right, my duty 's plain : if he—
Say so, nor ever change a tone of voice !
At night you meet the Prince ; meet me at eve !
Till when, farewell ! This discomposes you ?
Believe in your own nature, and its force
Of renovating mine ! I take my stand
Only as under me the earth is firm :
So, prove the first step stable, all will prove.
That first, I choose : [*Laying her hand on his.*]—the next to take, choose you ! [*She withdraws.*
Valence [*after a pause*]. What drew down this on me ?—on me, dead once,
She thus bids live,—since all I hitherto
Thought dead in me, youth's ardours and emprise,
Burst into life before her, as she bids
Who needs them. Whither will this reach, where end ?
Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet she 's above—
So very far above me ! All 's too plain :
I served her when the others sank away,
And she rewards me as such souls reward—
The changed voice, the suffusion of the cheek,
The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand,
—Reward, that 's little, in her generous thought,
Though all to me . . .
I cannot so disclaim
Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is !
She loves me !

[*Looking at the* Prince's *papers.*]—Which love,
these, perchance, forbid.
Can I decide against myself—pronounce
She is the Duchess and no mate for me?
—Cleves, help me! Teach me,—every haggard
face,—
To sorrow and endure! I will do right
Whatever be the issue. Help me, Cleves!

ACT IV

EVENING

SCENE—*An Antechamber*

Enter the Courtiers

Maufroy. Now, then, that we may speak—how spring this mine?
Gaucelme. Is Guibert ready for its match? He cools!
Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there!
"Stay, Valence! Are not you my better self?"
And her cheek mantled—
Guibert. Well, she loves him, sir:
And more,—since you will have it I grow cool,—
She 's right: he 's worth it.
Gaucelme. For his deeds to-day?
Say so!
Guibert. What should I say beside?
Gaucelme. Not this—
For friendship's sake leave this for me to say—
That we 're the dupes of an egregious cheat!
This plain unpractised suitor, who found way
To the Duchess through the merest die's turn-up
A year ago, had seen her and been seen,
Loved and been loved.
Guibert. Impossible!
Gaucelme. —Nor say,
How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,
Was this which—taking not their stand on facts

Boldly, for that had been endurable,
But worming on their way by craft, they choose
Resort to, rather,—and which you and we,
Sheep-like, assist them in the playing-off!
The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,
Not on the honest ground of preference,
Seeing first, liking more, and there an end—
But as we all had started equally,
And at the close of a fair race he proved
The only valiant, sage and loyal man.
Herself, too, with the pretty fits and starts,—
The careless, winning, candid ignorance
Of what the Prince might challenge or forego—
She had a hero in reserve! What risk
Ran she? This deferential easy Prince
Who brings his claims for her to ratify
—He 's just her puppet for the nonce! You 'll see,—
Valence pronounces, as is equitable,
Against him: off goes the confederate:
As equitably, Valence takes her hand!
The Chancellor. You run too fast: her hand, no subject takes.
Do not our archives hold her father's will?
That will provides against such accident,
And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the reversion
Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.
Gaucelme. I know that, well as you,—but does the Prince?
Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan, he helps,
For Valence's ennoblement,—would end,
If crowned with the success which seems its due,
In making him the very thing he plays,
The actual Duke of Juliers? All agree
That Colombe's title waived or set aside,
He is next heir.

The Chancellor. Incontrovertibly.
Gaucelme. Guibert, your match, now, to the train!
Guibert. Enough!
I 'm with you: selfishness is best again.
I thought of turning honest—what a dream!
Let 's wake now!
Gaucelme. Selfish, friend, you never were:
'T was but a series of revenges taken
On your unselfishness for prospering ill.
But now that you 're grown wiser, what 's our course?
Guibert. —Wait, I suppose, till Valence weds our lady,
And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,
Apprise the Prince.
Gaucelme. —The Prince, ere then dismissed
With thanks for playing his mock part so well?
Tell the Prince now, sir! Ay, this very night,
Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,
Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,
Then trust his gratitude for the surprise!
Guibert. —Our lady wedding Valence all the same
As if the penalty were undisclosed?
Good! If she loves, she 'll not disown her love,
Throw Valence up. I wonder you see that.
Gaucelme. The shame of it—the suddenness and shame!
Within her, the inclining heart—without,
A terrible array of witnesses—
And Valence by, to keep her to her word,
With Berthold's indignation or disgust!
We 'll try it!—Not that we can venture much.
Her confidence we 've lost for ever: Berthold's
Is all to gain.

Guibert. To-night, then, venture we!
Yet—if lost confidence might be renewed?
Gaucelme. Never in noble natures! With the base ones,—
Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,
And something grows and grows and gets to be
A mimic of the lost joint, just so like
As keeps in mind it never, never will
Replace its predecessor! Crabs do that:
But lop the lion's foot—and . . .
Guibert. To the Prince!
Gaucelme [*aside*]. And come what will to the lion's foot, I pay you,
My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay.
[*Aloud.*] Footsteps! Himself! 'T is Valence breaks on us,
Exulting that their scheme succeeds. We 'll hence—
And perfect ours! Consult the archives, first—
Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall!
Clugnet [*to* GAUCELME *as they retire*]. You have not smiled so since your father died!

As they retire, enter VALENCE *with papers*

Valence. So must it be! I have examined these
With scarce a palpitating heart—so calm,
Keeping her image almost wholly off,
Setting upon myself determined watch,
Repelling to the uttermost his claims:
And the result is—all men would pronounce
And not I, only, the result to be—
Berthold is heir; she has no shade of right
To the distinction which divided us,
But, suffered to rule first, I know not why,
Her rule connived at by those Kings and Popes,
To serve some devil's-purpose,—now 't is gained,

Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.
—Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be?
Eject it from your heart, her home!—It stays!
Ah, the brave world that opens on us both!
—Do my poor townsmen so esteem it? Cleves,—
I need not your pale faces! This, reward
For service done to you? Too horrible!
I never served you: 't was myself I served—
Nay, served not—rather saved from punishment
Which, had I failed you then, would plague me now.
My life continues yours, and your life, mine.
But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step—
Cleves! If I breathe no prayer for it—if she,
[*Footsteps without.*
Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself—
Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,
I . . .

Enter Prince BERTHOLD

Pardon, sir! I did not look for you
Till night, i' the Hall; nor have as yet declared
My judgment to the lady.

Berthold. So I hoped.

Valence. And yet I scarcely know why that should check
The frank disclosure of it first to you—
What her right seems, and what, in consequence,
She will decide on.

Berthold. That I need not ask.

Valence. You need not: I have proved the lady's mind:
And, justice being to do, dare act for her.

Berthold. Doubtless she has a very noble mind.

Valence. Oh, never fear but she 'll in each conjuncture

Bear herself bravely! She no whit depends
On circumstance; as she adorns a throne,
She had adorned . . .
Berthold. A cottage—in what book
Have I read that, of every queen that lived?
A throne! You have not been instructed, sure,
To forestall my request?
Valence. 'T is granted, sir!
My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized
Your claims . . .
Berthold. Ah—claims, you mean, at first preferred?
I come, before the hour appointed me,
To pray you let those claims at present rest,
In favour of a new and stronger one.
Valence. You shall not need a stronger: on the part
O' the lady, all you offer I accept,
Since one clear right suffices: yours is clear.
Propose!
Berthold. I offer her my hand.
Valence. Your hand?
Berthold. A Duke's, yourself say; and, at no far time,
Something here whispers me—an Emperor's.
The lady's mind is noble: which induced
This seizure of occasion ere my claims
Were—settled, let us amicably say!
Valence. Your hand!
Berthold. (He will fall down and kiss it next!)
Sir, this astonishment 's too flattering,
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so cheap.
Enhance it, rather,—urge that blood is blood—
The daughter of the Burgraves, Landgraves, Markgraves,
Remains their daughter! I shall scarce gainsay.

Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must rule:
Like the imperial crown's great chrysoprase,
They talk of—somewhat out of keeping there,
And yet no jewel for a meaner cap.
Valence. You wed the Duchess?
Berthold. Cry you mercy, friend!
Will the match also influence fortunes here?
A natural solicitude enough.
Be certain, no bad chance it proves for you!
However high you take your present stand,
There 's prospect of a higher still remove—
For Juliers will not be my resting-place,
And, when I have to choose a substitute
To rule the little burgh, I 'll think of you
Who need not give your mates a character.
And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant
The grey smooth Chamberlain: he 'd hesitate
A doubt his lady could demean herself
So low as to accept me. Courage, sir!
I like your method better: feeling's play
Is franker much, and flatters me beside.
Valence. I am to say, you love her?
Berthold. Say that too!
Love has no great concernment, thinks the world,
With a Duke's marriage. How go precedents
In Juliers' story—how use Juliers' Dukes?
I see you have them here in goodly row;
Yon must be Luitpold—ay, a stalwart sire!
Say, I have been arrested suddenly
In my ambition's course, its rocky course,
By this sweet flower: I fain would gather it
And then proceed: so say and speedily
—(Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's brazen self!)
Enough, sir: you possess my mind, I think.
This is my claim, the others being withdrawn,
And to this be it that, i' the Hall to-night,

Your lady's answer comes; till when, farewell!
[*He retires.*
Valence [*after a pause*]. The heavens and earth
stay as they were; my heart
Beats as it beat: the truth remains the truth.
What falls away, then, if not faith in her?
Was it my faith, that she could estimate
Love's value, and, such faith still guiding me,
Dare I now test her? Or grew faith so strong
Solely because no power of test was mine?

Enter the DUCHESS

The Duchess. My fate, sir! Ah, you turn away.
All 's over.
But you are sorry for me? Be not so!
What I might have become, and never was,
Regret with me! What I have merely been,
Rejoice I am no longer! What I seem
Beginning now, in my new state, to be,
Hope that I am!—for, once my rights proved void,
This heavy roof seems easy to exchange
For the blue sky outside—my lot henceforth.
Valence. And what a lot is Berthold's!
The Duchess. How of him?
Valence. He gathers earth's whole good into
his arms;
Standing, as man now, stately, strong and wise,
Marching to fortune, not surprised by her.
One great aim, like a guiding-star, above—
Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
His manhood to the height that takes the prize;
A prize not near—lest overlooking earth
He rashly spring to seize it—nor remote,
So that he rest upon his path content:
But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,
And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,

He sees so much as, just evolving these,
The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,
To due completion, will suffice this life,
And lead him at his grandest to the grave.
After this star, out of a night he springs;
A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones
He quits; so, mounting, feels each step he mounts,
Nor, as from each to each exultingly
He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.
This, for his own good:—with the world, each gift
Of God and man,—reality, tradition,
Fancy and fact—so well environ him,
That as a mystic panoply they serve—
Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,
And work his purpose out with half the world,
While he, their master, dexterously slipt
From such encumbrance, is meantime employed
With his own prowess on the other half.
Thus shall he prosper, every day's success
Adding, to what is he, a solid strength—
An aëry might to what encircles him,
Till at the last, so life's routine lends help,
That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,
His shadow shall be watched, his step or stalk
Become a comfort or a portent, how
He trails his ermine take significance,—
Till even his power shall cease to be most power,
And men shall dread his weakness more, nor dare
Peril their earth its bravest, first and best,
Its typified invincibility.
Thus shall he go on, greatening, till he ends—
The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthly world!

The Duchess. Some such a fortune I had dreamed should rise

Out of my own—that is, above my power
Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch—
Valence. For you?
The Duchess. It was not I moved there, I think:
But one I could,—though constantly beside,
And aye approaching,—still keep distant from,
And so adore. 'T was a man moved there.
Valence. Who?
The Duchess. I felt the spirit, never saw the face.
Valence. See it! 'T is Berthold's! He enables you
To realize your vision.
The Duchess. Berthold?
Valence. Duke—
Emperor to be: he proffers you his hand.
The Duchess. Generous and princely!
Valence. He is all of this.
The Duchess. Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake! No hand
Degrades me.
Valence. You accept the proffered hand?
The Duchess. That he should love me!
Valence. "Loved" I did not say.
Had that been—love might so incline the Prince
To the world's good, the world that 's at his foot,—
I do not know, this moment, I should dare
Desire that you refused the world—and Cleves—
The sacrifice he asks.
The Duchess. Not love me, sir?
Valence. He scarce affirmed it.
The Duchess. May not deeds affirm?
Valence. What does he? . . . Yes, yes, very much he does!
All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow saved—
Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks,—
Sorrow that 's deeper than we dream, perchance.

The Duchess. Is not this love?
Valence. So very much he does!
For look, you can descend now gracefully:
All doubts are banished, that the world might have,
Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time,
May call up of your heart's sincereness now.
To such, reply, "I could have kept my rule—
"Increased it to the utmost of my dreams—
"Yet I abjured it." This, he does for you:
It is munificently much.
The Duchess. Still "much!"
But why is it not love, sir? Answer me!
Valence. Because not one of Berthold's words and looks
Had gone with love's presentment of a flower
To the beloved: because bold confidence,
Open superiority, free pride—
Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned:
Because where reason, even, finds no flaw,
Unerringly a lover's instinct may.
The Duchess. You reason, then, and doubt?
Valence. I love, and know.
The Duchess. You love? How strange! I never cast a thought
On that. Just see our selfishness! You seemed
So much my own . . . I had no ground—and yet,
I never dreamed another might divide
My power with you, much less exceed it.
Valence. Lady,
I am yours wholly.
The Duchess. Oh, no, no, not mine!
'T is not the same now, never more can be.
—Your first love, doubtless. Well, what 's gone from me?
What have I lost in you?

Valence. My heart replies—
No loss there! So, to Berthold back again:
This offer of his hand, he bids me make—
Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh.
The Duchess. She's . . . yes, she must be very fair for you!
Valence. I am a simple advocate of Cleves.
The Duchess. You! With the heart and brain that so helped me,
I fancied them exclusively my own,
Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!
She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair?
Valence. Most fair, beyond conception or belief.
The Duchess. Black eyes?—no matter! Colombe, the world leads
Its life without you, whom your friends professed
The only woman: see how true they spoke!
One lived this while, who never saw your face,
Nor heard your voice—unless . . . Is she from Cleves?
Valence. Cleves knows her well.
The Duchess. Ah—just a fancy, now!
When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves,—I said,
—Thought, that is, afterward . . .
Valence. You thought of me?
The Duchess. Of whom else? Only such great cause, I thought,
For such effect: see what true love can do!
Cleves is his love. I almost fear to ask
. . . And will not. This is idling: to our work!
Admit before the Prince, without reserve,
My claims misgrounded; then may follow better
. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs impetuously,
Was she in your mind?

Valence. All done was done for her
—To humble me!
The Duchess. She will be proud at least.
Valence. She?
The Duchess. When you tell her.
Valence. That will never be.
The Duchess. How—are there sweeter things
you hope to tell?
No, sir! You counselled me,—I counsel you
In the one point I—any woman—can.
Your worth, the first thing; let her own come
next—
Say what you did through her, and she through
you—
The praises of her beauty afterward!
Will you?
Valence. I dare not.
The Duchess. Dare not?
Valence. She I love
Suspects not such a love in me.
The Duchess. You jest.
Valence. The lady is above me and away.
Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,
And the great heart, combine to press me low—
But all the world calls rank divides us.
The Duchess. Rank!
Now grant me patience! Here 's a man declares
Oracularly in another's case—
Sees the true value and the false, for them—
Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see.
You called my court's love worthless—so it turned:
I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,
And here you stickle for a piece or two!
First—has she seen you?
Valence. Yes.
The Duchess. She loves you, then.

Valence. One flash of hope burst; then succeeded night:
And all 's at darkest now. Impossible!
The Duchess. We 'll try: you are—so to speak—my subject yet?
Valence. As ever—to the death.
The Duchess. Obey me, then!
Valence. I must.
The Duchess. Approach her, and . . . no! first of all
Get more assurance. "My instructress," say,
"Was great, descended from a line of kings,
"And even fair"—(wait why I say this folly)—
"She said, of all men, none for eloquence,
"Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)
"The heart they sprung from,—none deserved like him
"Who saved her at her need: if she said this,
"What should not one I love, say?"
Valence. Heaven—this hope—
Oh, lady, you are filling me with fire!
The Duchess. Say this!—nor think I bid you cast aside
One touch of all the awe and reverence;
Nay, make her proud for once to heart's content
That all this wealth of heart and soul 's her own!
Think you are all of this,—and, thinking it,
. . . (Obey!)
Valence. I cannot choose.
The Duchess. Then, kneel to her!
[VALENCE *sinks on his knee.*
I dream!
Valence. Have mercy! Yours, unto the death,—
I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die!
The Duchess. Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus?
Even with you as with the world? I know

This morning's service was no vulgar deed
Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,
Explains all done and infinitely more,
So, takes the shelter of a nobler cause.
Your service named its true source,—loyalty!
The rest 's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,
Rise, sir! The Prince's words were in debate.
Valence [*rising*]. Rise? Truth, as ever, lady, comes from you!
I should rise—I who spoke for Cleves, can speak
For Man—yet tremble now, who stood firm then.
I laughed—for 't was past tears—that Cleves should starve
With all hearts beating loud the infamy,
And no tongue daring trust as much to air:
Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute?
Oh, lady, for your own sake look on me!
On all I am, and have, and do—heart, brain,
Body and soul,—this Valence and his gifts!
I was proud once: I saw you, and they sank,
So that each, magnified a thousand times,
Were nothing to you—but such nothingness,
Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,
A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance?
What is my own desert? But should your love
Have . . . there 's no language helps here . . . singled me,—
Then—oh, that wild word "then!"—be just to love,
In generosity its attribute!
Love, since you pleased to love! All 's cleared —a stage
For trial of the question kept so long:
Judge you—Is love or vanity the best?
You, solve it for the world's sake—you, speak first
What all will shout one day—you, vindicate

Our earth and be its angel! All is said.
Lady, I offer nothing—I am yours:
But, for the cause' sake, look on me and him,
And speak!

The Duchess. I have received the Prince's message:

Say, I prepare my answer!

Valence. Take me, Cleves!

[*He withdraws.*

The Duchess. Mournful—that nothing 's what it calls itself!
Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty—mere love!
And, love in question, what may Berthold's be?
I did ill to mistrust the world so soon:
Already was this Berthold at my side.
The valley-level has its hawks no doubt:
May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?
Yet Valence . . . let me see his rival then!

ACT V

NIGHT

SCENE.—*The Hall*

Enter BERTHOLD *and* MELCHIOR

Melchior. And here you wait the matter's issue?
Berthold. Here.
Melchior. I don't regret I shut Amelius, then.
But tell me, on this grand disclosure,—how
Behaved our spokesman with the forehead?
Berthold. Oh,
Turned out no better than the foreheadless—
Was dazzled not so very soon, that 's all!
For my part, this is scarce the hasty showy
Chivalrous measure you give me credit of.
Perhaps I had a fancy,—but 't is gone.
—Let her commence the unfriended innocent
And carry wrongs about from court to court?
No, truly! The least shake of fortune's sand,
—My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing fit,
King-cousin takes a fancy to blue eyes,—
And wondrously her claims would brighten up;
Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,
O'er-looked provisoes, o'er-past premises,
Follow in plenty. No: 't is the safe step.
The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost:
Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.
Melchior. Which is to say, you, losing heart already,
Elude the adventure.

Berthold. Not so—or, if so—
Why not confess at once that I advise
None of our kingly craft and guild just now
To lay, one moment, down their privilege
With the notion they can any time at pleasure
Retake it: that may turn out hazardous.
We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
O' the night, with our great masque: those favoured few
Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's chance
Of the early evening, may retain their place
And figure as they list till out of breath.
But it is growing late: and I observe
A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway
Not only bar new-comers entering now,
But caution those who left, for any cause,
And would return, that morning draws too near;
The ball must die off, shut itself up. We—
I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,
And sleep off headache on our frippery:
But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,
And, after breathing the fresh air outside,
Means to re-enter with a new costume,
Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.
I stick to privilege, on second thoughts.
Melchior. Yes—you evade the adventure: and, beside,
Give yourself out for colder than you are.
King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes?
Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive
With you too?
Berthold. Yes—no: I am past that now.
Gone 't is: I cannot shut my soul to fact.
Of course, I might by forethought and contrivance
Reason myself into a rapture. Gone:
And something better come instead, no doubt.

Melchior. So be it! Yet, all the same, proceed my way,
Though to your ends; so shall you prosper best!
The lady,—to be won for selfish ends,—
Will be won easier my unselfish . . . call it,
Romantic way.
Berthold. Won easier?
Melchior. Will not she?
Berthold. There I profess humility without bound:
Ill cannot speed—not I—the Emperor.
Melchior. And I should think the Emperor best waived,
From your description of her mood and way.
You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts;
But are too indolent and fond of watching
Your own—you know that, for you study it.
Berthold. Had you but seen the orator her friend,
So bold and voluble an hour before,
Abashed to earth at aspect of the change!
Make her an Empress? Ah, that changed the case!
Oh, I read hearts! 'T is for my own behoof,
I court her with my true worth: wait the event!
I learned my final lesson on that head
When years ago,—my first and last essay—
Before the priest my uncle could by help
Of his superior, raise me from the dirt—
Priscilla left me for a Brabant lord
Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.
I am past illusion on that score.
Melchior. Here comes
The lady—
Berthold. And there you go. But do not! Give me
Another chance to please you! Hear me plead!

Melchior. You'll keep, then, to the lover, to the man?

Enter the DUCHESS—*followed by* ADOLF *and* SABYNE *and, after an interval, by the* Courtiers

Berthold. Good auspice to our meeting!
The Duchess. May it prove!
—And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?
Berthold. (Ay, that 's the point!) I may be Emperor.
The Duchess. 'T is not for my sake only, I am proud
Of this you offer: I am prouder far
That from the highest state should duly spring
The highest, since most generous, of deeds.
Berthold. (Generous—still that!) You underrate yourself.
You are, what I, to be complete, must gain—
Find now, and may not find, another time.
While I career on all the world for stage,
There needs at home my representative.
The Duchess. —Such, rather, would some warrior-woman be—
One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in friends—
One like yourself.
Berthold. Lady, I am myself,
And have all these: I want what 's not myself,
Nor has all these. Why give one hand two swords?
Here 's one already: be a friend's next gift
A silk glove, if you will—I have a sword.
The Duchess. You love me, then?
Berthold. Your lineage I revere,
Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,
Do homage to your intellect, and bow
Before your peerless beauty.

The Duchess. But, for love—
Berthold. A further love I do not understand.
Our best course is to say these hideous truths,
And see them, once said, grow endurable:
Like waters shuddering from their central bed,
Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,
That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throe,
A portent and a terror—soon subside,
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues
In sunshine, sleep in shadow, and at last
Grow common to the earth as hills or trees—
Accepted by all things they came to scare.
The Duchess. You cannot love, then?
Berthold. —Charlemagne, perhaps!
Are you not over-curious in love-lore?
The Duchess. I have become so, very recently.
It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,
Respect, and all your candour promises,
By putting on a calculating mood—
Asking the terms of my becoming yours?
Berthold. Let me not do myself injustice, neither.
Because I will not condescend to fictions
That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit,
It does not follow that my guarded phrase
May not include far more of what you seek,
Than wide profession of less scrupulous men.
You will be Empress, once for all: with me
The Pope disputes supremacy—you stand,
And none gainsays, the earth's first woman.
The Duchess. That—
Or simple Lady of Ravestein again?
Berthold. The matter 's not in my arbitrament:
Now I have made my claims—which I regret—
Cede one, cede all.
The Duchess. This claim then, you enforce?
Berthold. The world looks on.

The Duchess. And when must I decide?
Berthold. When, lady? Have I said thus much so promptly
For nothing?—Poured out, with such pains, at once
What I might else have suffered to ooze forth
Droplet by droplet in a lifetime long—
For aught less than as prompt an answer, too?
All 's fairly told now: who can teach you more?
The Duchess. I do not see him.
Berthold. I shall ne'er deceive.
This offer should be made befittingly
Did time allow the better setting forth
The good of it, with what is not so good,
Advantage, and disparagement as well:
But as it is, the sum of both must serve.
I am already weary of this place;
My thoughts are next stage on to Rome. Decide!
The Empire—or,—not even Juliers now!
Hail to the Empress—farewell to the Duchess!
[*The* Courtiers, *who have been drawing nearer and nearer, interpose.*
Gaucelme. —"Farewell," Prince? when we break in at our risk—
Clugnet. Almost upon court-licence trespassing—
Gaucelme. —To point out how your claims are valid yet!
You know not, by the Duke her father's will,
The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,
Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour—
So 't is expressly stipulate. And if
It can be shown 't is her intent to wed
A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right
Succeed to Juliers.
Berthold. What insanity?—
Guibert. Sir, there 's one Valence, the pale fiery man

You saw and heard this morning—thought, no doubt,
Was of considerable standing here:
I put it to your penetration, Prince,
If aught save love, the truest love for her
Could make him serve the lady as he did!
He 's simply a poor advocate of Cleves
—Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place
With danger, gets in by a miracle,
And for the first time meets the lady's face—
So runs the story: is that credible?
For, first—no sooner in, than he 's apprised
Fortunes have changed; you are all-powerful here,
The lady as powerless: he stands fast by her!

The Duchess [*aside*]. And do such deeds spring up from love alone?

Guibert. But here occurs the question, does the lady
Love him again? I say, how else can she?
Can she forget how he stood singly forth
In her defence, dared outrage all of us,
Insult yourself—for what, save love's reward?

The Duchess [*aside*]. And is love then the sole reward of love?

Guibert. But, love him as she may and must—you ask,
Means she to wed him? "Yes," both natures answer!
Both, in their pride, point out the sole result;
Nought less would he accept nor she propose.
For each conjecture was she great enough
—Will be, for this.

Clugnet. Though, now that this is known,
Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

The Duchess. —What, sir, and wherefore?—since I am not sure

That all is any other than you say!
You take this Valence, hold him close to me,
Him with his actions: can I choose but look?
I am not sure, love trulier shows itself
Than in this man, you hate and would degrade,
Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus.
Nor am I—(thus made look within myself,
Ere I had dared)—now that the look is dared—
Sure that I do not love him!
Guibert. Hear you, Prince?
Berthold. And what, sirs, please you, may this prattle mean
Unless to prove with what alacrity
You give your lady's secrets to the world?
How much indebted, for discovering
That quality, you make me, will be found
When there 's a keeper for my own to seek.
Courtiers. "Our lady?"
Berthold. —She assuredly remains.
The Duchess. Ah, Prince—and you too can be generous?
You could renounce your power, if this were so,
And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love
Yet keep my Duchy? You perhaps exceed
Him, even, in disinterestedness!
Berthold. How, lady, should all this affect my purpose?
Your will and choice are still as ever, free.
Say, you have known a worthier than myself
In mind and heart, of happier form and face—
Others must have their birthright: I have gifts,
To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight.
Against a hundred alien qualities,
I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing:
Wed you the Empire?
The Duchess. And my heart away?

Berthold. When have I made pretension to your heart?
I give none. I shall keep your honour safe;
With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts
Yon marble woman with the marble rose,
Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,
In graceful, slight, silent security.
You will be proud of my world-wide career,
And I content in you the fair and good.
What were the use of planting a few seeds
The thankless climate never would mature—
Affections all repelled by circumstance?
Enough: to these no credit I attach,—
To what you own, find nothing to object.
Write simply on my requisition's face
What shall content my friends—that you admit,
As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,
Or never need admit them, as my wife—
And either way, all 's ended!
The Duchess. Let all end!
Berthold. The requisition!
Guibert. —Valence holds, of course!
Berthold. Desire his presence! [ADOLF *goes out.*
Courtiers [*to each other*]. Out it all comes yet;
He 'll have his word against the bargain yet;
He 's not the man to tamely acquiesce.
One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,
May turn the tide again. Despair not yet!
[*They retire a little.*
Berthold [*to* MELCHIOR]. The Empire has its old success, my friend!
Melchior. You 've had your way: before the spokesman speaks,
Let me, but this once, work a problem out,
And ever more be dumb! The Empire wins?
To better purpose have I read my books!

Enter VALENCE

Melchior [*to the* Courtiers]. Apart, my masters!
[*To* VALENCE.] Sir, one word with you!
I am a poor dependant of the Prince's—
Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence.
You are no higher, I find: in other words,
We two, as probably the wisest here,
Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools.
Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact
Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them?
Do you reply so, and what trouble saved!
The Prince, then—an embroiled strange heap of news
This moment reaches him—if true or false,
All dignity forbids he should inquire
In person, or by worthier deputy;
Yet somehow must inquire, lest slander come:
And so, 't is I am pitched on. You have heard
His offer to your lady?
Valence. Yes.
Melchior. —Conceive
Her joy thereat?
Valence. I cannot.
Melchior. No one can.
All draws to a conclusion, therefore.
Valence [*aside*]. So!
No after-judgment—no first thought revised—
Her first and last decision!—me, she leaves,
Takes him; a simple heart is flung aside,
The ermine o'er a heartless breast embraced.
Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played too oft!
Once, to surprise the angels—twice, that fiends
Recording, might be proud they chose not so—
Thrice, many thousand times, to teach the world

All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since men
Can have such chance yet fail so signally,
—But ever, ever this farewell to Heaven,
Welcome to earth—this taking death for life—
This spurning love and kneeling to the world—
Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old!
Melchior. Well, on this point, what but an absurd rumour
Arises—these, its source—its subject, you!
Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,
They say, your service claims the lady's hand!
Of course, nor Prince nor lady can respond:
Yet something must be said: for, were it true
You made such claim, the Prince would . . .
Valence. Well, sir,—would?
Melchior. —Not only probably withdraw his suit,
But, very like, the lady might be forced
Accept your own. Oh, there are reasons why!
But you 'll excuse at present all save one,—
I think so. What we want is, your own witness,
For, or against—her good, or yours: decide!
Valence. [*aside*]. Be it her good if she accounts it so!
[*After a contest.*] For what am I but hers, to choose as she?
Who knows how far, beside, the light from her
May reach, and dwell with, what she looks upon?
Melchior [*to the* Prince]. Now to him, you!
Berthold [*to* VALENCE]. My friend acquaints you, sir,
The noise runs . . .
Valence. —Prince, how fortunate are you,
Wedding her as you will, in spite of noise,
To show belief in love! Let her but love you,
All else you disregard! What else can be?

You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood—purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself.
Melchior. Ay, sir:
But softly! Where, in the object we select,
Such love is, perchance, wanting?
Valence. Then indeed,
What is it you can take?
Melchior. Nay, ask the world!
Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,
An influence o'er mankind.
Valence. When man perceives . . .
—Ah, I can only speak as for myself!
The Duchess. Speak for yourself!
Valence. May I?—no, I have spoken,
And time 's gone by. Had I seen such an one,
As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—
So should my task be to evolve her love:
If for myself!—if for another—well.
Berthold. Heroic truly! And your sole reward,—
The secret pride in yielding up love's right?
Valence. Who thought upon reward? And yet how much
Comes after—oh, what amplest recompense!
Is the knowledge of her, nought? the memory, nought?
——Lady, should such an one have looked on you,
Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world
And say, love can go unrequited here!
You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—
Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,
All goodness cherished where you dwelt—and dwell.
What would he have? He holds you—you, both form
And mind, in his,—where self-love makes such room

For love of you, he would not serve you now
The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies,
Win you new realms, or best, to save the old
Die blissfully—that 's past so long ago!
He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,
Away, forgotten!—He gives that life's task up,
As it were . . . but this charge which I return—
[*Offers the requisition, which she takes.*
Wishing your good.
The Duchess [*having subscribed it*]. And opportunely, sir—
Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,
Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.
Most on a wedding-day, as mine is too,
Should gifts be thought of: yours comes first by right.
Ask of me!
Berthold. He shall have whate'er he asks,
For your sake and his own.
Valence [*aside*]. If I should ask—
The withered bunch of flowers she wears—perhaps,
One last touch of her hand, I never more
Shall see!
[*After a pause, presenting his paper to the* Prince.
Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!
Berthold. I will, sir!
The Duchess [*as* VALENCE *prepares to retire*].
—Nay, do out your duty, first!
You bore this paper; I have registered
My answer to it: read it and have done!
[VALENCE *reads it.*
I take him—give up Juliers and the world.
This is my Birthday.
Melchior. Berthold, my one hero

Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my books,
Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch,—
Speak, for I know you through your Popes and Kings!
Berthold [*after a pause*]. Lady, well rewarded! Sir, as well deserved!
I could not imitate—I hardly envy—
I do admire you. All is for the best.
Too costly a flower were this, I see it now,
To pluck and set upon my barren helm
To wither—any garish plume will do.
I 'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy—
You can so well afford to yield it me,
And I were left, without it, sadly lorn.
As it is—for me—if that will flatter you,
A somewhat wearier life seems to remain
Than I thought possible where . . . 'faith, their life
Begins already! They 're too occupied
To listen : and few words content me best.
[*Abruptly to the* Courtiers.] I am your Duke, though! Who obey me here?
The Duchess. Adolf and Sabyne follow us—
Guibert [*starting from the* Courtiers]. —And I?
Do I not follow them, if I may n't you?
Shall not I get some little duties up
At Ravestein and emulate the rest?
God save you, Gaucelme! 'T is my Birthday, too!
Berthold. You happy handful that remain with me . . . That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite
I shall leave over you—will earn your wages
Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade!
Meantime,—go copy me the precedents
Of every installation, proper styles
And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes—

While I prepare to plod on my old way,
And somewhat wearily, I must confess!

The Duchess [*with a light joyous laugh as she turns from them*]. Come, Valence, to our friends, God's earth . . .

Valence [*as she falls into his arms*]. —And thee!

END OF VOL. II

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
Edinburgh & London

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 11 March, 2020